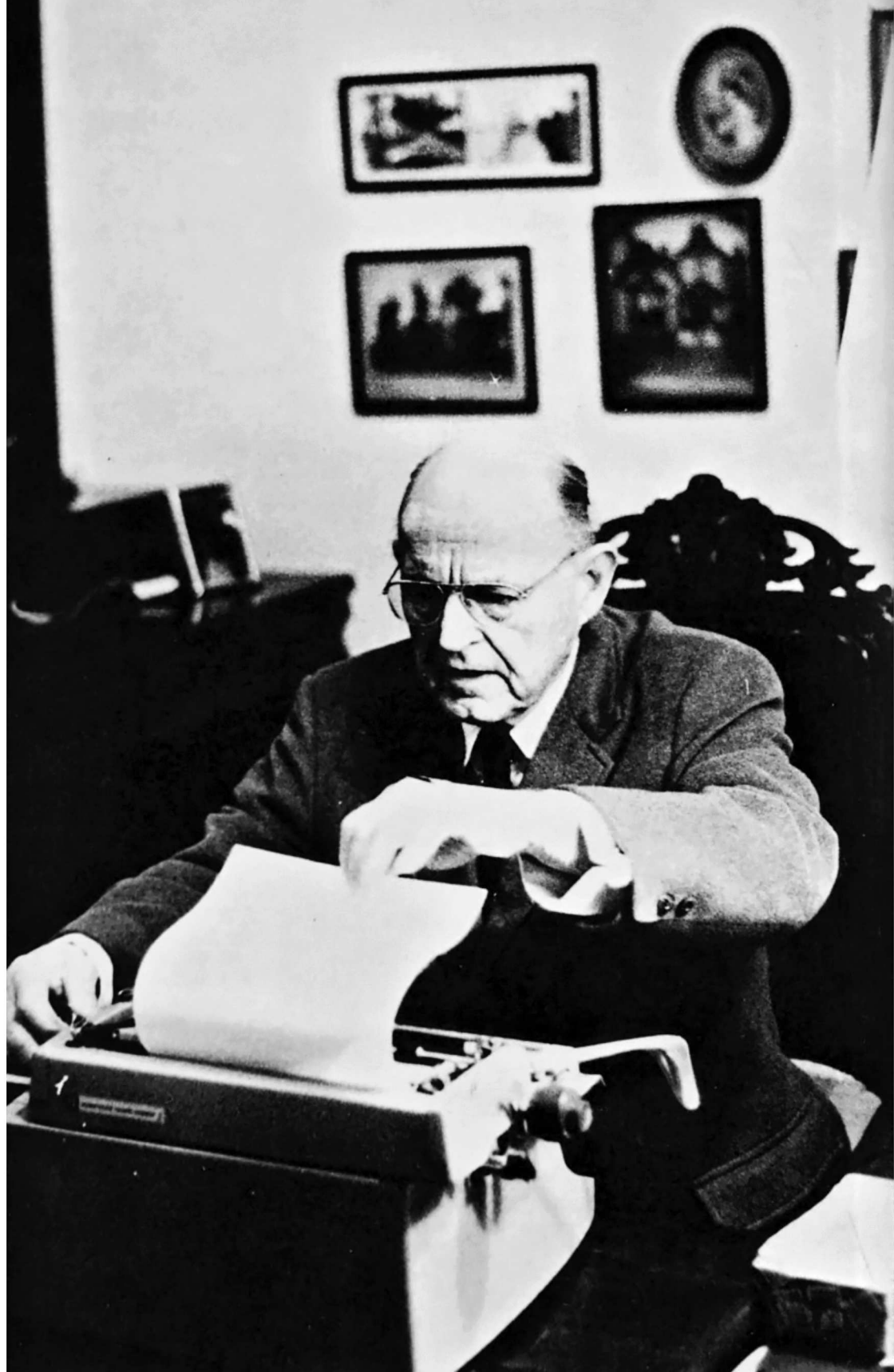
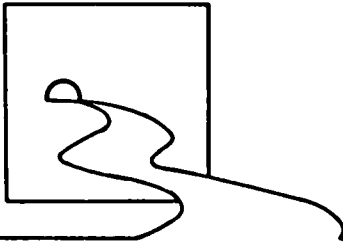


THE CHATTAHOOCHEE  
REVIEW





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# THE CHATTAHOOCHEE REVIEW

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*Lamar York*

**Volume VIII  
Number 4  
Summer 1988**

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All manuscripts should be typed. Prose should be double-spaced; poetry should be single-spaced within stanzas, double-spaced between stanzas, one poem per page.

Enclose a self-addressed envelope, but attach stamps loosely. We prefer to send letters of acceptance on letterhead.

We appreciate cover letters. They are especially helpful if they include sufficient information for the editors to compose a one or two sentence biography for the *Notes on Contributors* page, in the event of acceptance.

*The Chattahoochee Review* sponsors the following campus activities:

The Chattahoochee Reviewers, the campus literary society

The Calendar of Readings

The *Review* Prizes for Fiction and Poetry

Appalachian Heritage Day

Southern Writers at Work: a videotape series

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The first issue of *The Chattahoochee Review* set forth the editorial policy "to offer unknown writers space in print next to their established contemporaries." That policy came to fruition in the same first issue, Fall 1980, thanks to Andrew Lytle, who although already the famous author of many fine books, allowed this magazine to publish his "Artist in a Time of Disorder" next to the work of students in freshman English. That juxtaposition is still the practice of this magazine because Mr. Lytle showed us in the beginning that such a publication is possible.

Yet that publication of a "reknowned contemporary" in our first issue was not without mishap. Although every misplaced comma and inverted letter of the twenty-three issues since has been called to our attention, Mr. Lytle did not point out to us that we had virtually mangled his essay. It is altogether characteristic of Andrew Lytle's gentlemanliness that we did not even know of our error for five years, and that even then it was not he who pointed it out.

Andrew Lytle's appearance on the campus of DeKalb College in this magazine's first year of publication, as one of our first invited guest writers, provided the motivation for poetry and essays by students who had never seen their work in print, nor expected to. In honor of Mr. Lytle's generosity as writer and sympathy as editor, we close this eighth year of publication with essays in tribute to the man whose editing brought distinction where it did not seem possible, to the oldest literary quarterly in America. The *Chattahoochee Review* thanks Andrew Lytle for permission to make his life and work the subject of Volume VIII, Number 4. We are happy to think that for the hour or so consumed in the perusal of the essays here, his readers are our readers.

This summer issue contains literary criticism and interviews but is made up mostly of affectionate recollections by people to whom Mr. Lytle has been a friend.

## Learning to Know Andrew Lytle

*David A. Hallman*

I was asked to write for this special issue a personal appreciation of Andrew Lytle, not a literary criticism. The assignment is both a pleasure and a trouble, since it is so difficult to separate a man and his life from his work. I hope, though, Mr. Lytle, that you and our readers will make the distinction I try to draw and simply enjoy one person's account of his small claim on a part of your life.

I first met Andrew Lytle in 1958, but he doesn't remember it. My own recollection is hazy at best. When we met again, late in 1983, the occasion was one of the momentous events of my life and, I suspect, more memorable than our first encounter for Mr. Lytle. The backgrounds of these two meetings might have some interest for readers of this piece if only because they show the whimsies and fortuities of life, and they may even reveal some of the many sides of a remarkable personality whom I have been trying to learn to know.

Our first meeting occurred when I was an undergraduate English student at Vanderbilt. Mr. Lytle participated in our annual literary symposium, along with Richard M. Weaver, Warren Beck, and, from the Vanderbilt faculty, Donald Davidson and Walter Sullivan. About all that I remember from the program are a panel discussion of selected student fiction and a public reading by Mr. Lytle. He had recently published *The Velvet Horn*, and he must have read from that. Our "meeting" consisted entirely of a handshake in some receiving line, and I was too shy even to ask for his autograph in my first edition of his masterpiece. That early meeting was hardly more memorable for me than for him.

The second meeting was both more interesting in its circumstances and more portentous for me personally. After Vanderbilt, I had a mercifully aborted career in journalism, spent three years in the army, and returned to the groves of academe. A Ph.D. dissertation on Donald

Davidson's poetry established my specialty in southern literature and I began teaching the Southern Literature course here at James Madison University, publishing modestly in that field. Some years ago—I forgot exactly, but probably around 1980 or so—I began to look for a major research project. I realized that no one had written a definitive critical or biographical study of Andrew Lytle. I mulled over the idea of an authorized biography for some time, but was essentially too timid to approach Lytle in my role as an unknown scholar-critic. The idea had been all but discarded when I received a letter from someone I did not even know but who would change my life with his generosity and selfless interest. The letter, from one David Bovenizer, at that time a weekly newspaper editor near Richmond, invited me, on the basis of some essays of mine which he had read, to visit his home with Andrew Lytle when the author was scheduled to speak to the Richmond Civil War Roundtable. The invitation seemed too much like fate's hand for me to refuse, and so I very uncharacteristically accepted. When I approached Mr. Lytle with my proposal for an authorized biography, he hedged. He couldn't prevent me from writing, but he didn't believe in "authorized" studies and had rejected several other offers in the past. But persistence paid off; I sent him samples of my work, got his reluctant go-ahead, and began to try to know perhaps the most fascinating person I have ever met. And a work that had begun largely as an academic project turned into a labor of love.

There are two sides to my involvement in Mr. Lytle's biography, each of interest in its own way. First, Mr. Lytle's approval of my labor opened doors for me which I should never have dared to knock at otherwise. Mr. Lytle's friends and relatives, his old Vanderbilt and Agrarian colleagues, and his many grateful students, along with practically the entire Sewanee community in which he has had such a long and fruitful association, all welcomed me as though an insider. Cleanth Brooks graciously treated me to lunch in New Haven and recounted his first impressions of Lytle at Vanderbilt, when Brooks was only a freshman and Lytle a senior classman. Robert Penn Warren, after Mr. Lytle had confirmed my authority, granted me an interview in his home which lasted about eight hours, including dinner. A classmate of Lytle's at Vanderbilt, Warren vividly recalled Lytle in his student quarters, holding forth on some French painting or other with a worldly air that awed the younger boy from Kentucky. More recently though, Lytle had visited with Warren and his wife, the fine novelist Eleanor Clark in their Connecticut home and had been the honoree for a dinner party. At the end of the meal, obviously enjoying himself, Lytle insisted on singing a set of southern folk tunes. "I didn't know Andrew could sing," exclaimed Mrs. Warren. "I didn't either," said her husband. But I did. A year earlier I had arranged for Mr. Lytle to make a series of speaking appearances



at my school, including an address to an overflowing student group of aspiring writers. After a completely captivating, extemporaneous address, I asked him to conclude by reading the closing paragraphs of his short story "Jericho, Jericho, Jericho." He added extra lines to the quoted passages from the old ballads of "Little Brown Jug" and "Hog Drovers"; later several of my students told me they could not hold back their tears.

There have been many other kindnesses, more than I can acknowledge. The Brainard Cheneys were among my first interviews; former students like Madison Jones, Smith Kirkpatrick and Walter Sullivan, *Sewanee Review* editor George Core, Mr. Lytle's lovely sister Miss Polly and numerous other relatives and friends, from Memphis to Florida to Kentucky to Charleston, have all opened their homes and their memories to me. I did not know—could not have known—what a job I had undertaken.

The second aspect of my relationship to Mr. Lytle, though—that is, trying to know the man—has been for me by far the most rewarding. Once he gave me his reluctant approval for the project, I have had almost complete access to not only library holdings across the country but to the man himself. Over the past three years, we have lived together, both at my home and at his, for well over a month of days. Anyone who has visited in The Log Cabin on the mountain in Monteagle knows the joys of the Lytle hospitality. Bourbon sipped out of silver cups before a huge fireplace or on his wrap-around porch, elaborately prepared and delicious meals, complete with his famous (and inimitable) biscuits, become part of the ritualistic life he allows others to share. My first visit was a summer trip, and I found myself out by 8 a.m. every morning helping to hoe and plant in his beloved garden on the Sewanee grounds. Well, I decided, if I'm going to write about an agrarian, then I might as well get some taste of the soil myself, although I suspect now that was his purpose all along.

And then there is the Lytle personality, unique and inimitable. When I began my research, I thought I could rely on my good memory and early journalistic background for interviews, so I did not even have a tape recorder when I first began to talk with him. I immediately discovered how easy it is to be wrong; if I ask Andrew Lytle a question, he tells me a story. "The best story-teller in America," Robert Penn Warren has called him, and he has also cautioned me that to capture that personality on paper is my biggest challenge as an aspiring biographer. The stories I will save for a larger work, but I appreciate the perspicacity of Mr. Warren's advice. Others, who have known Mr. Lytle for much longer than I, are still trying to define that peculiar grace, the combination of folk-wisdom and sophistication, and an ineffable something that attracts but never subjects.

As a last word, it seems ironic that at my first and most forgettable

meeting with Andrew Lytle he was in the company of Richard Weaver. This past November, Mr. Lytle received the prestigious Richard M. Weaver award for Scholarly Letters awarded annually by the Ingersoll Foundation of the Rockford Institute in Illinois. At the ceremony, which I was privileged to attend, Mr. Lytle's acceptance—one of his unique combinations of earthy humor and philosophical wisdom—wowed the black-tie audience. I was seated with a reporter for the *Wall Street Journal* and his wife who could only remark that they had never heard anyone speak like that. I was reminded of Robert Penn Warren's comment to me that his wife was a "Yankee" and never really encountered a personality like Lytle before. I also was beginning to learn.

Andrew Lytle can be discussed on many levels: a personality, an intellectual and personal influence, a force for good. Because of the nature of this essay, I have not even touched on the most important, though: Lytle the artist, or as he might say, the "craftsman." I hope that will come later, but until then, Mr. Lytle, like the other contributors to this issue, I salute you. Trying to learn to know you has taught me a lot of other things, and that is no small debt.

## Last Class

*Lawrence Hetrick*

One Sunday afternoon in the fall of 1957 I came across an article in the Gainesville *Daily Sun* announcing a lecture by an Irishman who had known, among others not familiar to me, James Joyce, my literary hero that year. Offered that night in Bryan Hall auditorium on the University of Florida campus, it was introduced by an elaborately mannered man in a black suit and string tie who covered much ground quickly. Dramatically, ceremonially, he spoke about language and literature ("The Word") and incidentally about a large red-faced man in Irish kilts (Ian Yeats) who turned out to be disproportionately less energetic.

It went on a long time for someone who wanted to hear about James Joyce. Of the lecture I remember not one thing. The black-suited man had vexed me with contradictions. Bald-headed, dressed and mannered as if from another century, he moved with a young man's power and grace. He seemed European, and yet there were Southern signs. Was he what became of Southerners educated in France? Even the type of his southernness was unfamiliar to me, my only samples having come from the plain North Florida style, "Grits in a tin can," as Brainerd Cheney described the writings of Marjorie Rawlings.

Afterwards I walked across the campus to the reception in the upstairs dining room of "The Hub," the newly built student "Social Center." There it was clear Mr. Lytle was the center of energy. I remember him and Yeats standing under a ceiling spot in the cleared, dim room. Mr. Lytle's vitality was more convincing up close. I saw the kindness that went with it. I asked Mr. Yeats if he had known James Joyce. Yes, he had, he said.

Three falls later, in 1960, I enrolled in Mr. Lytle's fiction writing class for graduates and advanced undergraduates. It met each Thursday night in Building "D," a WW II barracks temporarily serving (until 1977) as

faculty office space. Mr. Lytle's office, the upstairs southeast corner room, was crowded by one long seminar table with a desk at its end, leaving just enough space around it for chairs. The room wouldn't have held many more than the class's usual thirteen. Once seated, you stayed awhile. It was easy from any seat at the table to address anyone else in the room, but something other than its dimensions must explain why we did speak not only to our teacher but directly and rationally to each other during the class.

Mr. Lytle began, that fall, to wear his fat gold watch, tied to a black ribbon around his neck and deposited in a coat or vest pocket. When seated, he unlooped it and placed it before him on the desk, class was in session. When he picked it up, class was over. As the days shortened he moved our meeting time forward with the darkness, from 7:30 to 7:00 to 6:30. In the spring following he naturally moved it back again until, at the end of that year's class, we were meeting at 8:00, EST. No one ever complained about this pleasant, logical, non-institutional, agrarian way of doing things.

Except in mid-winter, light was left as class began, late sunlight slanting through the slats of Venetian blinds into the golden dust motes and blue cigarette smoke, casting stripes across the pale green plasterboard and tongue-and-groove wainscoting beneath. Such effects of light made the room seem under a trance that enabled my imagination, but not of the stories others were discussing. Outside in the darkness the high, lighted windows of the old library would be shining on the tops of cabbage palms and crepe myrtles. In rain they sparkled with the window light as the wind lashed them.

But after a few weeks, except for idle moments before class, I forgot all about the room's atmosphere, which had become only the background glare of the neon tubes overhead, as my gaze turned inward upon the story we discussed.

We began each class with what we called "the story for this week," by Crane or Chekov or Joyce, assigned for discussion from the 1960 edition of *The House of Fiction*. For this we prepared competitively, not by research but by multiple rereadings, and how much better than ordinary we did tended to be a matter of psychological fit. Sooner or later each found a story he was most apt to reveal and defend.

Next a student, usually a struggling one, might present a short paper on the application of a critical concept to the technique of a story.

Then came the heart of the matter, our stories, two, three, or four of them read aloud by Mr. Lytle. Their sequence was planned for interest and instruction: good, not so good, worst, and best. His presentation, and I don't know anyone else who has mastered reading aloud as Mr. Lytle has, made the most of any writing, but without exaggeration. Outright aesthetic mistakes he gave a neutral treatment that allowed

them a natural death. Things genuine enough but poorly done he struggled to present, sometimes with comments. Good things shone without any obvious emphasis in his reading, because he understood and loved them.

In that way his preparation paid off. He seemed to have read the stories twice beforehand, but anyhow he had read them with a kind of attention many of us searched in vain for elsewhere. We imitated it as best we could. Quickly we learned to "read" a story read aloud. Soon we could after a hearing quote passages, a gift of short-term memory. Hearing them didn't hinder our attention to small points of phrasing, but as our class moved through the year we focused more on our stories' large successes and failures. Our discussions didn't rush. If the story were very good or bad different kinds of silence would follow. The better the story the more we spoke of its meaning. Many of us learned we criticized most sharply problems that characterized our own work.

Each Thursday night's class concluded with a story read by Mr. Lytle that probably few of us had known of, one that in effect rewarded us for our work of the evening. Student fiction may have a certain sameness to it. The last story shocked us into realizing there were yet more kinds. Its excellence also shocked us; we could guess what pains the writer had gone to. Sometimes it had been mailed back to Gainesville by a former student, like Merrill Joan Gerber or Thomas Adams. These showed us there existed a stage of writing between our own and that of the masters we read in our text, something we practically needed to know.

We stayed late, till 10:45 or as late as 11:30 but never only till the prescribed 10:15. But if the session as a whole was long, so was the break, a half-hour usually. Break discussions were louder and wilder. Even with thirty minutes I several times turned back to class without having gotten down the hall to the drinking fountain. Once Mr. Lytle noticed the indecision of my return and declared a second break of five minutes.

In session, we paid attention. There were no casual byplays, no wasted moments. The object absorbed us: fiction, what it meant, how it worked, and might work better. That kind of seriousness, based on agreement about means and purposes, and enabled by the force of Mr. Lytle's character, inevitably aroused combativeness in a few. I haven't seen anyone else as gracefully and firmly represent his position as Mr. Lytle did, with the class, but not the intending warrior, realizing that belief and charity had undercut the grounds of a purely egotistical conflict. Or someone could try to make trouble by saying, vehemently, that an aesthetic consideration didn't matter. He wouldn't let that kind of cynicism pass, but neither would he let it take his time. Aside from its illogic, its affective failure would become clear to all but perhaps the rebel cynic. What had been meant to be a nasty scene was gone in a moment, the class moving on, the perpetrator stunned into silence wherein

he must have wondered why no one took up his argument.

Naturally we got addicted to the kind of communication we were enjoying in class and nearly from the beginning sought ways of seeing each other outside. At first it seemed an interesting thing to try, later imperative. I remember best Frank Hannold, Tom Hammond, Pat Waters, Roger Coles, Patricia Butler, Tony Austin, Alan Himber, and Felicity Trueblood. Of these, Felicity was probably the most accomplished writer and Pat the most avid student. Former students, especially Frank Taylor and Smith Kirkpatrick, were on the scene and often came to class. The class that year was distinguished by Smith's clear-headed remarks.

We found ways of seeing each other informally pretty regularly, especially in the east wing of the main cafeteria, now the "Rathskeller," then more open and well-lit, without stage, big screen TV, bar, projection booth, or colored acrylic "stained glass" cubist windows. It didn't seem odd to us then that we could meet our professors there and spend a chunk of morning with them over coffee. I remember Ants Oras, Warren French, Jim Palmer, Will Ormond, Robert Bryan, and Aubrey Williams. Or some of us from the fiction class would take a table together, discussing, most often, compositional methods and "the story for this week."

A commonplace of those meetings was "You need to learn the terms." By "you" we meant "we." "The terms" were the critical terms Mr. Lytle directed us to use in discussing fiction: action proper and enveloping action, scene and panorama, controlling image, and a good many more. We spent time in class, but more outside it, discussing their meanings and applications. Lack of training in common justified that. A hand-hold on Aristotle's *Poetics* was assumed, and whoever lacked it was sent to book. But the meanings of "the term" weren't available in books, neither in one book nor in all books together. Partly their meanings were the result of Mr. Lytle's thinking (and that of previous classes, I imagine), partly the result of our usage. They were supported by the practical and theoretical writings of James, Conrad, Flaubert, Gordon, and Lubbock, among others, though when some of us turned to *The Craft of Fiction*, the alleged source of some of our ideas, we were disappointed. At any rate, the meanings of the terms clarified and elaborated and refined themselves for us as the class went on. "It takes time to learn the terms," we said, and really we never got done doing it.

Some terms, like "enveloping action," had been defined in several ways, so we speculated with what they meant. The meanings of others, for instance "controlling image," were stable if complex, understandable once you'd worked through a half-dozen cases. Some terms I wish I had questioned more closely, like "rendering." Of course it was Jamesian and meant dramatic rather than expository presentation, but what did that mean? We knew by examples, more or less. But in later times I've found

that where I see rendering, as in *A Dance to the Music of Time*, some of Mr. Lytle's students see rhetoric.

The point of the terms, as most of us knew and Mr. Lytle made crystal clear on occasions that needed it, was not Jesuitical definitions but their use in understanding fiction in order to write it. Our fictional concepts became useful when they occupied a middle ground giving access both to the abstract and the particular. You can't make fiction by imitating literally another writer's devices, and you can't make it by following abstract receipts. You can make it by basing your devices on ones you have understood in and *beyond* particular instances. "To admire on principle is the only way to imitate without loss of originality," Coleridge said. We were for example interested in how commitment to a point of view, especially "third person central consciousness," could charge narrative language with poetic intensity. For us stories from *Dubliners* like "An Encounter," "Araby" and "The Dead" demonstrated that method.

Probably the greatest benefit of having a critical vocabulary was that we could talk to each other about fiction on our own, in class and out. Learning got to be something more than our teacher and our books. Mr. Lytle cared enough to give us terms we could rely on. He meant them, so we meant them.

Not only that, I dimly realized then, and better later, we were freed from mere taste, his taste, our taste, which, no matter how fine, no matter the greatness of its source, is essentially inarticulate and arbitrary, and in a class, tyrannical. The invisible and absolute law of many a creative writing class I've observed has been the taste of the teacher. That the teacher is often a writer makes it more dangerous. Some students' tastes will harmonize with it, others not. Only one thing is certain: no student will analytically understand or evaluate it by means of itself.

Critical concepts clearly stated allowed us to understand Mr. Lytle's aesthetic program. Perhaps they also allowed his "taste" in fiction to be so variously surprising. I necessarily mean that it was surprising to me, then. He recommended I read Djuna Barnes, John Hawkes, Sigrid Undset, Ford Madox Ford, Isak Dinesen, Nathaniel West, Jean Stafford, and Siegfried Sassoon. Whether the list seems unusual to anyone else now I have no way of knowing. Each suggestion as he made it, typically in conference over a manuscript, would seem intriguing or baffling, but never predictable. Not to me as I understood him then.

Now I know more reasons for those choices: that Caroline Gordon did know the kinship of her *Alec Maury*, *Sportsman* to *Memoirs of a Fox Hunting Man*, and so probably conveyed her understanding to Andrew in those years at Benfolly and Cornsilk. But might that bit of knowledge not have passed the other way? Ford for that matter could have pointed it out to both.

I can't think of a faster way of indicating the kind of thing Mr. Lytle did with our manuscripts in conference than saying it bore a close family resemblance to the advice Miss Gordon sent Flannery O'Connor about a draft of *Wise Blood* (*The Georgia Review*, Winter 1979). But it was more immediate, faster. No background discussions were necessary—we had done all that in class. It was, if the story needed it, editing of the broadest kind, moving scenes, speeding transitions, suggesting changes in point of view or dramatic emphasis. Nor would he merely suggest if he were sure. By contrast, he told Felicity Trueblood at their first conference that her story was "done." Only after failures to get other stories done did she realize the unusual thing he had said.

The illumination caused by Mr. Lytle's editing could be stunning. He might fashion the best sentence of the story by changing the relationship of its clauses, or by cutting sentences before and after. He could make a scene snap by cutting adventitious material around dialogue. Demonstrations of this kind shocked us into learning. Sometimes we directly reported the results of our conferences to classmates in the cafeteria, not so much because we were impressed by the editor's magic as because we were inspired by the potential our work released when given the right kind of revision. He made it seem we ourselves had done it, or could, that his revisions had been the result of gifts we had unawares.

In conference he was intense, serious, concentrated, nearly impatient to have us understand what our writing was doing. In class he was graceful, careful, articulate, relaxed but energetic, patient, impartial. In conference he was passionately to the purpose of getting the story right. In class he was intellectually and artistically resourceful and generous in giving every story complete, extended consideration. In conference he told us what we had done. In class he wanted to find out the deepest sources and remotest goals of our stories. He assumed they had them.

Outside of class and conference, on campus, he was dramatic. That is, he acted, played roles, one only per day, long enough for him to get immersed in it. Across the magnolia-shaded quadrangle of the Plaza of the Americas, or in the sandy space between the old library (the only library then) and Language Hall (he refused to call it Anderson Hall, pointing out the original entablature facing University Avenue that clearly read "Language Hall") one could see at a distance by his carriage that he was in the grip of a persona other than his ordinary twentieth century self. His manner with a cane and cape might make it clear he played an eighteenth-century French nobleman, but otherwise one had to wait for him to speak to know whether he was medieval English squire or Southern backwoodsman (from woods more remote than literal) or someone more unexpected.

He had a peculiar gift for making the past seem present in his roles, for



representing the past as being alive, as indeed it was in him. In his roles you felt, and may still do, the conjunction of the pre-automotive South and the European middle ages. He most often played, and thereby championed, the Southern yeoman farmer, and that character overlapped the English squire. So the view that Southern society has been polarized by class extremes got no support. Of course he didn't reject hierarchy, but his high characters had a worldly earthiness and his low ones simple elegance. In his mouth the backcountry English of our land, that we had been taught to regard as illiterate and substandard, turned out to be good old-fashioned English, earthy and elegant by turns. Song, tale, speech, lore, manners, bearing, and the values those embodied, all contributed to the impression of presences brought forth from tradition into our little world of courtyards and classrooms.

Driving out into the country stimulated Mr. Lytle's recollection and celebration of the agrarian South. In the desolate marginal farms of Northern Florida's hammocks and prairies you could see the Confederacy in ruins still, if you were riding in his 1957 yellow Cadillac convertible on the way to Henry's Liquor Store, which lay a few yards beyond our eastern county line, in the sandhills known as the Big Scrub. The journey evoked the fabulous and fantastic in Mr. Lytle. I generalize what was appropriate to the moment.

In that poor land most structures, shed-like, seemed made of slats, screenwire, tarpaper, and tin. Henry's Liquor Store was. So its interior was a shock: a massive mahogany-turned-black bar backed by an Empire pier glass-and-cabinet, a sort of wall-sized sideboard elaborated with spiral balusters, bead and reel mouldings, and pineapple finials, around which the room had apparently been erected. Gazing into the glass of this improbable reminder of the Old South during our obligatory ceremonial before return, Mr. Lytle was at his most visionary, claiming once to have remembered not only what the glass reminded him of but also where previously he had seen it. But further about this neither of our memories serves any longer.

Toward the end of the fall semester, 1960, he announced to us that he had accepted the editorship of the *Sewanee Review* at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. That certainly put a different complexion on the class, but change in its conduct would have been hard to discern. Mostly we simply valued the class more, and wondered how things would turn out. Regret wasn't an attitude anyone found easy to express in Mr. Lytle's presence. Since the spring semester of 1961 would be his last at Florida, a good many students tardily clamored to get in, but there were few additions. The group had long since felt its own identity, which, indeed, continued the following year under Mr. Kirkpatrick.

I don't know if the imminence of his departure reminded Mr. Lytle of Mr. Ransom's departure from Vanderbilt in 1937, but he certainly

spoke of that affair, in which he was closely involved, on several occasions about that time, including some incendiary details that have not been published, details through which he may have expressed his mixed feelings about leaving. There are plenty of similarities about the two cases if one wants to think them through, although Mr. Ransom didn't know or couldn't have counted on Kenyon President Chalmer's intention of founding a review. In Mr. Lytle's case, the professional consideration *was* the review. All of us understood the correctness of his decision in terms of that, and the interest and importance of the volumes he edited continues to prove us right, beyond what we could have known. Allen Tate, with a high estimation of the possibilities, was still surprised.

We knew Mr. Lytle's departure was going to change our world, but not how much. Florida was a small place, and most of us knew that without him it wouldn't hold us long. Perhaps some of us who hadn't already done so began to see the university as limiting, provincial. But after all that was part of what had made it exciting: every serious fiction writer in Gainesville was gathered around one table on Thursday nights. Magnitude and diversity would have distracted some of us from our main chance. Besides, not only was the place provincial, so were we. Our manners toward Mr. Lytle, for instance, were provincially respectful, never cynical or satirical, as I soon learned students' elsewhere could be. But we weren't worshipful, or in awe, either. We were straightforward. As far as I remember our manners lacked sophistication in any direction whatsoever. We were provincially uncomplicated. Most mercifully, our innocence spared us the need to be thought cool.

To our last class that year, late in May, Mr. Lytle brought, as he usually did, a couple of books from which to choose a story to read as the concluding piece. But these were books he had written himself. I don't think anyone missed that detail.

At first the late spring sun slanting through the blinds into dust and smoke made the little room mysterious, but the class at work that night quickly got to seeming interminably anti-climactic. For one thing, too immediate an awareness of all our transitions had got into the room. And the fiction was mediocre, written by those who had left their work till the end of the term. Or maybe it had taken an entire semester to write things so long. Once, Mr. Lytle interrupted his reading to say, without condescension, "It goes on like this for another six pages," which he skipped. We understood that it was exactly as he said. The last student story of the evening had been written by a young woman whose face I barely recall and whose name I don't. The story was very long, and not terribly interesting, but it was serious about the business of being fiction. At least the story made it seem a business. Discussing it took us well past eleven. Mr. Lytle picked up his watch, winding it as he always did.

To those who lingered afterwards—everyone, I suppose—he explained

that he had intended to read us two scenes of individual combat, one done early in his career (from *The Long Night*) and one recently (from *The Velvet Horn*), demonstrating by their differences how experience had taught him economy and directness of presentation. As usual the lesson suited (or would have) the student fiction we'd heard that night. But also he had been quite serious about finally presenting his work in person to us. Our disappointment in missing the scenes was real, but the proper farewell of our teacher we did not miss.

\* \* \* \*

Mr. Lytle's commitment to his writing and to that of his students, does not alone explain the class's excellence, nor its difference from other writing classes taught by the great and the small I've observed in the subsequent twenty-five years. Neither does my youth (I was twenty) subjectively explain it away. I was young in other classes. Nor can I believe my affection for the man overwhelmed my judgment of the teacher, as though respect for the teacher grew as it confused itself with affection. No. I was in fact new and simple enough to respect and admire what he did as a teacher before I liked him at all. Liking him does not make me want to explain to you why his class worked. What I learned does.

At the time I learned most about what he knew about fiction by hearing him read. On the other hand, he conveyed values, not just about fiction, that for me have lasted usefully. Certainly he dramatized his values with expressive force. He embodied the truth that artistic purpose must, to be effective, inform the self at its deepest levels, and once informed must not be gainsaid. That is a valuable lesson, but not everyone learned it, nor was meant to.

My explanation of our class is not mystical. Although it appears to have practical consequences, I offer it because I've found no way to deny it: our class's learning derived from its explicit critical method and undeviating procedures being applied to a distinct subject. That explains why the class worked as creative writing classes ordinarily don't. Mr. Lytle cared enough to make methods and procedures clear, to inform them with his intelligence, and to see that we used them. They allowed us to reason to ourselves and to each other, freely using a common language, and, for once, with a sense of relief and revelation, staying on the subject.

## Tribute to Andrew Lytle

*Cleanth Brooks*

I first made the acquaintance of Andrew Lytle in the autumn of 1924. I was a very timid freshman at Vanderbilt who had been taken under the wing of a Vanderbilt senior, Saville (Bill) Clark. He had charitably allowed me to room with him during my first quarter in old Kissam Hall.

In that way I met some of Bill Clark's classmates and friends, the likes of R.P. Warren, Lyle Lanier, and Andrew Lytle. All three were to contribute to the Agrarian manifesto, *I'll Take My Stand*. The Vanderbilt student body was relatively small in those days; even so, except for my luck in rooming with a senior, in the ordinary course of events I should scarcely have had a chance to meet any of them. It was only in later years, however, that I came to realize how lucky I had been.

It was not for some years, moreover, that my acquaintance with Andrew grew into a warm friendship. For example, I was in England during the early 1930's and then in Louisiana, whereas Andrew was in New York and later in Tennessee and Alabama on his farm. But I was reading his stories and his novels, and became very much aware of his great literary talents. Later on, after I had moved to Louisiana and then to Connecticut, we saw each other fairly often at conferences and on visits, when he came to Connecticut or I came South. A visit with Andrew wherever and whenever was always a delight.

What shall I choose to say about Andrew here, about a man so rich in interests, talents, and aspects of personality? Shall I talk about the literary artist who has in addition an elaborate and consistent theory of fiction and who knows how to apply it? Shall I talk about Lytle the philosopher and, I even dare say, the theologian? His theology would probably shock the scholars at Union Theological Seminary in New York, but I find it not only fresh and humanly engaging, but thoroughly orthodox. Or shall I deal with Lytle as a Civil War buff, who probably knows

more about that war than any other amateur with whom I ever talked? Or with Andrew as the political theorist who can make an eloquent case for a true balance of powers in the old aristocratic state as opposed to the present-day plutocratic state?

Or shall I write about Lytle as the peerless raconteur, the man who can tell you story after story in the authentic language of the Southern folk, pithy, sometimes a little bawdy, always packed with home-spun wisdom? Andrew is a fine and exacting stylist of English prose, but he has an intimate knowledge of the vernacular of the Southern folk, and he can slip from one dialect into the other with the velvet ease of a Mercedes-Benz automatically shifting its gears up or down.

There is a story—I am assured that it is true—which provides a nice illustration. Andrew had come in from his farm to the city on farm errands, had met a friend who persuaded him to come to dinner just as he was, and so he did. At the dinner party a rather pretentious lady, seated next to Andrew, took one look at his clothes and drew her own conclusions. Andrew sensed immediately what was going on in his dinner partner's mind; so when she asked him where he lived he was prepared to play the country bumpkin: he said that he lived on Corn Silk Plantation. When asked what he grew, he answered, "We grows lespedeza." The next question, intended to floor the bumpkin, was "Qu'est-ce que c'est lespedeza?" Andrew then proceeded to overwhelm her with a detailed account, in perfect French, of the cultivation of this leguminous plant grown for hay.

In the new literary movements of our century the literary revolutionaries again and again made the point that the literary language ought never to depart too far from what was actually spoken or could actually be spoken by some human being. The literary language must get back to its roots in the language of living discourse. Too much refinement would render it bland and "literary." The oral tradition was important, not merely in the eyes of people like Ezra Pound. Earlier still William Butler Yeats saw that the writers of the Irish Literary Renaissance needed the underpinning of the of the language and the literature of the Irish folk. That language was not to be despised but to be used. The Irish example, by the way, is highly relevant to the Southern Literary Renaissance. There are genuine parallels between the two.

So the importance of the folk language has a special meaning for the Southern writer. Andrew's intimate knowledge of the folk dialects and the lore contained in them, and his insistence on their importance for the highest type of literature, not so much by precept as by brilliant example, is a matter of great consequence. But to illustrate these matters in detail from his own work would take me into a full-dress discussion of the stories and the novels—far beyond what I originally set out to do: to furnish a little sheaf of reminiscences about this extraordinary man.

## **"Jacks are Much Misunderstood"**

*Thomas M. Carlson*

*"Andrew was always the perfect listener to tales, for the simple reason that he himself was the perfect teller of tales . . . . But if he was capable of listening in appreciation, he was also capable of listening for appropriation. The ill-formed tale needed to be set right, to have pace, tone, or gesture amended. Out of a deeper reason yet, Andrew might appropriate a tale—because it touched something in his nature, in the way a subject 'chooses' the writer."*

**Robert Penn Warren on *The Long Night***

As Andrew Lytle's fiction reveals, many tales that chose the author were "set right," but one stands out—the story of a man who belongs less to history than to the annals of Southern folklore. At the center of *A Wake for the Living* is the story of Jack Lytle, the oldest son of Andrew Lytle's maternal great-grandmother, Julia. Born with a cleft palate, he is described as a "shy and observant" child who observed early in life that one cure for shyness was to take a drink. Sent away to school to remove him from "bad influences," he learned to bury his liquor in the ground and suck it up through wheat straws. That school in Sweetwater, Tennessee, was about as far as he ever got from his mother. All of his life the feminine world was his sustenance, sorrow, and bane. Life in his mother's house, Rose Hill, embodied what Lytle calls "the last of the Southern matriarchy [which] held the wake, that illusory sense of life prevailing in the presence of death." *Illusory* can be better understood in terms of its Latin root *illudere*—to jest at, to mock—than in its modern sense—deceiving. There was certainly nothing deceptive about the sense of life in Julia's house. Jack was the jester who presided over that wake, his life a celebration of frail human endurance in the presence of failure and death. A luckless lover whose dreams "of maenads and nymphs with gently stroking hands" were never realized, Jack, for whom

all other courtships failed, courted the muse. And when she was bashful, he came to her assistance with drink.

Two stories frame the saga of Jack. His mother, on one of her trips to town, "sent word to Uncle Jack that, if he was sober, she would like for him to drive her home before night set in. Uncle Jack was discovered, without much search, at Guggenheim's saloon . . . and there the message was delivered. 'You tell Ma,' he said, 'her message came too late.'" It often came too late for Jack, who tried to fend off both his mother and the approaching darkness with whiskey, words, and laughter. All failed, however, to sustain him at the end, and he is last seen with his mother back at Rose Hill: "Increasingly he [had become] the subject of rough humor. Once somebody put salt in Uncle Jack's jug of whiskey. He flourished his pistol, and everybody fled the house but [his mother]. She said, 'You may shoot me, but you are not going to run me out of my own house.'" Of course, he didn't, but Jack's ability to laugh at himself is absent in this story. He had given up on words.

Perhaps it is true, as the narrator says, that charity ran out on the historical Jack, but a myth has survived. The mythical Jack is forgiven and forgiving and treasured beyond all other family heirlooms. This jester who, unlike Malvolio, could suffer his public embarrassment through laughter—mostly his own—performed a ritualistic role for family and community: "Such chastisement allows the community to purge itself, to remind itself of our common plight."

Lytle argues in *A Wake for a Living* that the stable force of the state is the family, its form the most perfect for man in his fallen condition. "A terrifying sign of the family's doom . . . is set forth in homes for senior citizens . . . . In a way old maids and old bachelors were the strength of the family. They were the visible sign that man and woman and child are not enough. They stand for a warning, too, that some turn out with better luck than others; and this reaffirms a family's strength and self-perpetuating habits."

Various threats to this "total sense" of family are explored in Andrew Lytle's short fiction. In his "Foreword" to *Stories: Alchemy and Others*, Lytle argues that "man's attitude to woman is the foundation of society, under God. In the South, because of the prevailing sense of the family, the Matriarch becomes the defining image." She is a dangerous and endangered species in the short stories.

All of the stories are in the recently republished collection, except the first published story, "Old Scratch in the Valley." The heroine is Judith Searcy, "the last matriarch of Long Gourd Valley" (the farm in "Mister MacGregor" and "Jericho, Jericho, Jericho," two later stories, is also Long Gourd). The narration resembles that in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily": a local raconteur, relying on the oral tradition in the community, describes an action that he did not entirely witness. One voice in the

community, however, stands out so clearly that it usurps the narrative point of view at the end of the story. That is the voice of Judith's son Jack. The concluding scene describes the funeral of Micajah Searcy, Judith's brother, whose defiance of God and nature so offended his sister that she convinced the town preacher to "read him out of the church." He dies unrepentant, and the moral burden shifts to Judith. Jack, "who hit the bottle pretty steady before the funeral to nerve him," imaginatively describes the struggle between Judith and Old Scratch who has come to claim her brother's soul. Jack is certain that he smells fire and brimstone: "But as soon as Ma commenced to pray, the air freshened up considerable. The first five minutes, and the devil stopped wagging his tail; the next five and he dropped it beneath his legs like a yaller cur, and by the time she was done you could hear him thrashing his way back to the infernal regions." Here is the first appearance in Lytle's fiction of Uncle Jack, fortified by the spirits of the world, testifying to the power of the matriarchy that clearly extends "beyond the grave." In his "Foreword," Lytle describes this point of view: "At a family gathering . . . there would always be one voice more capable than another of dominating the conversation . . . a kind of bardic voice."

Andrew Lytle's second story, "Mr. MacGregor," further explores the limits of male authority in the family. The farm is Long Gourd before the Civil War. Della, a house servant, has been whipped by the master of the house for insolence. The mistress of the house objects: "She's mine," she argues. "So are you mine, my dear," is her husband's response. The result is a life and death struggle between the master of the house and a black servant named Rhears, who fights for the honor of both women — his wife Della, the servant who was whipped, and his mistress, Mrs. MacGregor. The title refers to the challenge of Rhears to "Mister," not Master MacGregor. Both slaves were given to Mrs. MacGregor by her father, and we are told that "they somehow became a part of her." Rhears is described as the embodiment of his mistress's will; Della may embody her sensibility. Rhears is killed by Mr. MacGregor in the fight, and Della is to be sold. One suspects, however, that Mr. MacGregor's troubles are not over.

The first-person narrator is the MacGregor son, a child at the time, who has grown up thinking marriage is a martial affair. He never marries: "I'm peaceful by nature," he says. And so, like Uncle Jack, he turns to drink. The only act that moves him to violence is "put[ting] salt in [his] whiskey." Both Jack Lytle and Jack Copleigh, the protagonist of *The Velvet Horn*, have similar complaints.

This narrator is a degraded form of that paradigm. He lost his innocence too soon and tells his story compulsively, confusing the public and the private thing. He is a cynic and a drunk whose speech and manners reveal an ironic decline from the tenuous civility of his parents. Both



parents and child suffer a loss of authority and identity through this experience, and a central riddle in Lytle's fiction is presented for the first time: who is the master and who is the slave? Although the answer given in this story is ambiguous, Mr. MacGregor's mastery may be a deception, as the title implies. Only with the emergence of Jack Croleigh will a character exhibit the presence of mind and heart to affirm that we are all slaves, and that service is our proper business.

Kate McGowen, the protagonist of "Jericho, Jericho, Jericho," also suffers a defeat of will. It is not man but death who appears to be the victor. The action never leaves the mind of this dying matriarch; the men in the story seem weak in comparison. Kate knows there are two spirits at work in the world. One spirit is equal to "the trials of planting, of cultivating, and of the gathering time"; one is not. The grandson who will inherit the farm is the latter spirit, not equal to life and its responsibilities. At the crisis of the story he tells his grandmother that he and his city-bred fiancée have decided to spend their winters in town, and that Cousin George, an aging bachelor who lives on the farm, would be better off in a home for senior citizens. This revelation precipitates the old woman's death.

After she orders her grandson from the room, her distraught mind ranges into the past until it focuses on a single image, an earlier family responsibility, her brother, Jack. He stands before her mind's eye, "handsome and shy, but ruined from his cradle by a cleft palate, until he came to live only in the fire of spirits . . . . She saw him leave for school, where he was sent to separate him from his drinking companions, a church school where the boys buried their liquor in the ground and sipped it up through straws." His letters from school are similar to Jack Lytle's in *A Wake for the Living*: "Dear Ma, quit offering so much advice and send me more money. You send barely enough to keep me from stealing." Kate remembers her brother Jack, like his namesake, visiting and staying "as long as the whiskey held out, growing more violent towards the end." This Jack is not allowed to carry the story away with him. He is killed in Breckinridge's charge at Murfreesboro, and will not be resurrected until *The Velvet Horn*. But his startling emergence in this story initiates the catastrophe. As Kate imagines the burial parties, after the battle, looking in the darkness for Jack's body, and for many others, those spectral figures appear in her own room. "Whom were they searching for? Jack had long been buried."

Not long. And not deep — as Jack Croleigh demonstrates at the crisis of *The Velvet Horn* when he rises from the grave of Joe Cree. But Kate is about to die. That "gaunt" figure from the burial parties who stalks out of her imagination and across her room may link Kate's fate with that of her brother and of the South, but it is also "the specter of an old sin" that has returned to haunt her, and this is the final reckoning. The

judgment should not be much in doubt, for Kate bears the same name as Andrew Lytle's grandmother, called "Mammy" in *A Wake for the Living*, that formidable woman who opposed women's voting: "You've got to let the men do something." She is the sister of Uncle Jack, an identity confirmed in the final words that she hears on this earth: "You want to say something, Mammy?" "She had plenty to say, but her tongue had somehow got glued to her lips." Words fail for Kate, but she hears beyond "the steady silence of time" a hymn of endurance and hope, not a "dirge of pain" and defeat, as the black specters fade before the voices of black field hands singing in the cotton fields.

The fate of Jericho/Long Gourd is less important at the end of this story than the fate of Kate's fierce spirit. This is not the trial "of planting, of cultivating, [but] of the gathering time," and "she [is] Joshua," whose triumph over time turned the physical defeat of Jericho into a spiritual victory.

In "The Mahogany Frame," Uncle Jack has been replaced by Bomar, the maternal uncle — another bachelor who drinks too much, and whose cynicism regarding women seems almost pathological. This man serves as guide for the young narrator on a duck hunt which becomes, for the boy, an escape from his mother and a quest for manhood, and becomes, for Bomar, an indirect assault upon the matriarchy. Women intrude everywhere in this masculine society: in the conversations of men, in memory, and in debased form at the hunting lodge itself. Their vulnerable position in this hunting society is defined through an Homeric allusion to the adultery of Helen and the fall of Troy. Biblical allusions to the Creation and the Fall further increase the mythic richness of the story which encompasses human consciousness from first light when "all things seemed at a beginning" to the boy's final shot when "the dead body dropped and the world was."

In its thematic development, "The Mahogany Frame" anticipates *The Velvet Horn*. The subject is the boy's accidental and partial initiation into the sexual and spiritual mysteries that Jack Crokeigh will later call "the mystery of creation." The boy's rebellion against his mother and his confusion on the lake between mudhens and ducks must be balanced in his awakening consciousness with his contemplation of that "noiselessly" hovering duck, "if duck it was," that "melted" into the "blue-gray haze," — a brief vision of purity in a soiled world. As dusk falls and the guns are put away, the birds descend and light at last on the still waters "everywhere around them." Even Bomar, for a moment, relents: "God, God," he whispered.

Although it is not clear what kind of man this boy will grow up to be, the adult protagonists in Andrew Lytle's first three novels fail to recognize the union of spirit and matter so clearly rendered at the end of "The Mahogany Frame." These novels describe the brutal conse-

quences of man's separation from nature, man, woman, and God. Most men in this fiction are hunters, not planters; violence is the standard in a world of masculine control. All of the early fiction deals with the end of a society. Through brief glimpses of the domestic order, hope is extended that some sense of community can survive, that a balanced and productive life can be achieved, but the first three novels focus on failure.

In *The Long Night* and *At the Moon's Inn*, the protagonist is a man of action, not reflection. In *A Name for Evil*, the self-possessed narrator is the solitary reflector of an action that he does not understand. Action and reflection fail in these novels because of insufficient light. Pleasant McIvor's dark world of *The Long Night* exists from dusk to dawn. Hernando DeSoto's quest is dimly lit by the cold spectral light of the moon. *A Name for Evil* ends in darkness, silence, and a world encased in ice. But in the final scene, as Henry Brent looks up from the bottom of the abyss his wife has fallen into, he sees, "hovering above," a light which casts "no reflection." Like the birds at the end of "The Mahogany Frame," that light is waiting to descend.

*The Velvet Horn* lifts us from the abyss to a world in which light and dark find their proper balance, for this novel marks the re-emergence of the comic mode in Andrew Lytle's fiction, not seen since "Old Scratch." Returning to the surface of Lytle's imagination is a figure who has been underground, so to speak, for 25 years—Uncle Jack. He is able to unite action and reflection, his words and deeds providing a partial anodyne to the dark riddles of the earlier fiction. The result is a masterpiece.

Jack Cropleigh is the maternal uncle of Lucius Cree, whom Jack guides to maturity, marriage, and the possibility of a productive life after Lucius's father, Joe Cree, is killed by a falling tree. Another lonely, aging bachelor, this Uncle Jack proves to be "the strength of [his] family . . . the visible sign that man and woman and child are not enough." He, alone, stands between his nephew Lucius and total family disintegration.

How does he do it? Jack's vision of life's trials is primarily comic. He does not see the world as a great snake. Bitten while he is sleeping by what he assumes to be a snake, Jack discovers that he has instead been pecked by a hen. Man is not snake-bit in Jack's world. He is hen-pecked. That is an annoyance, but it is also a relief, and for Jack, perhaps, a flicker of longing, never fulfilled.

As the "hovering bard" in this novel, Jack fuses all story-telling traditions: Southern oratory, biblical prophecy, tall tale, the rhetoric of Southwest humor, and scatological, sexual country humor. Word play in *The Velvet Horn* is stunning, and play it is. Jack loves riddles—sacred and profane. The lifelong riddle he poses for himself is to explain "the ways of God to man." For Jack, like Pleasant McIvor, DeSoto, and Henry Brent, is another puritan hero trying to work out a private understanding with

God, and failing. Isn't a man who seeks to explain God's ways an ass? Jack knows it. Much of his humor is at his own expense. Jackasses, he tells his brothers, "are much misunderstood. A jack may look rough . . . but appearances are deceiving. No maid is shyer. . . . He's as dubious before the brute act as if he knew what man and beast had done to love . . . and oh, what a sadness at the mounting." The story of the reluctant jack conveys Jack's tragic ambivalence towards "the mystery of creation," but the bray of the jackass reveals the tone of his voice which can turn brute life "to comedy. And not too high at that." But high enough! "Upon what did the parents of God flee? Upon what did [Christ] mount His triumph into Jerusalem? . . . Ah, what a divine world if all men were jacks."

This kind of religious irony is reinforced at the crisis of the novel when Jack rises from the grave of Joe Cree which Jack, in a drunken stupor, had fallen into, and prepares for the climax where Jack gives up his life and saves the life of his nephew. Although his dying words—"Christ! This cannibal world"—reflect the tension between Jack's need for love and his recognition of man's likeness to the lower animals, this final curse—or blessing—or both—resists explication; for Jack, at the end of his life, is as large and complex as myth itself.

At the end of his life Jack Lytle was not, but they share much in common. Both are identified with words and whiskey, the spirits of this world. Both play the fool, the jester, in their societies. Pleasant McIvor, DeSoto, Henry Brent are fools, and don't know it. And they are incapable of play. Jack Croleigh recognizes that "love is a divine play. Brought to earth, it's a mighty rough game and no holds barred. . . . You play here, but the score is settled elsewhere."

The story of Jack Lytle in *A Wake for the Living* is curiously, sadly unfinished. He is described late in his life "wandering out the night in loneliness calling where his horse takes him." Kate McGowen, in "Jericho, Jericho, Jericho," remembers her brother Jack on one of those lonely sojourns. Both Jack Croleigh and Jack Lytle "learned life by heart," but the game, perhaps, was too rough for Jack Lytle. A sympathetic imagination extended that game in *The Velvet Horn* and tried to settle the score. The tally will be much debated, but not the quality or value of the sport.

Clearly, the stories about Uncle Jack that Andrew Lytle heard in his youth "touched something in his nature, in the way a subject 'chooses' the writer." They survive not only in *A Wake for the Living* but—"with tone or gesture amended"—in much of Lytle's fiction. Uncle Jack, the luckless lover with a cleft palate, who struggled throughout his life "to raise a mush-mouthed drone to lyrical heights" and pondered, at times, "the advantages of a cleft foot"—for community and for artist, he is life's jest and jester, but he is also the reminder "of our common plight." Jack

learned the hard way that "there is only one sensible contemplation for the lover perpetually denied: those spirits which giveth the desire but take away the execution. When these fail, the lover wanders out the night." This description of Jack Lytle's final years recalls Jack Croleigh's ironic contemplation of the spirits of this world—and of the next—and the dark wanderings of his lonely life. Other benighted characters in earlier fiction should also be recalled.

At the end of his life, Jack Croleigh returns to a home that his servant John Greer has tended in his absence. John's response to Jack's homecoming could serve as epigraph for this novel and as comic commentary on Andrew Lytle's art in general: "I haves hope, now he taken to jackassing again." Jackassing may represent this artist's highest comic achievement—it did for Apuleius and for Shakespeare. Although such comedy can transform life's frustrations into laughter, the effect can be profoundly moving and sobering.

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## **"Follow the Thread into the Labyrinth": A Fond Recollection of Andrew Lytle**

*Merrill Joan Gerber*

When I first entered Andrew Lytle's writing class in 1957 (the year he published *The Velvet Horn*) I was a nineteen year old girl from Brooklyn who had come to the University of Florida by way of Miami Beach. My family had moved to Florida when I was fourteen to escape the cold winters of New York; to me "the south" was mainly a place where a person could get a good suntan.

Our writing class met at night in a rickety wooden structure attached by a staircase-bridge to the English classroom building. Mr. Lytle would arrive, smiling, his glasses strung around his neck on a black grosgrain ribbon, and greet us all heartily. The students sat around long wooden tables, and Mr. Lytle sat in a very old, overstuffed chair. Behind him was a row of windows and, beyond them, were the lights of the library, shining in at us. Beside Mr. Lytle, during each class, sat Smith Kirkpatrick, who also taught writing classes at the university and who was, even then, working on his novel *The Sun's Gold*. Kirk, with his kind, intense face, usually sat smoking, listening carefully. When Mr. Lytle could not elicit from us the answers he was seeking, he would finally turn to Kirk, who always knew the flaw or excellent thing to which Mr. Lytle was hoping to draw our attention.

Before discussing the students' stories, Mr. Lytle liked to read one of his own favorites to us. He was an inspired actor, and any story he read took on the dimension of theater. I can still see his face as he began reading Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man is Hard to Find." ("The grandmother didn't want to go to Florida. She wanted to visit some of her connections in east Tennessee and she was seizing at every chance to change Bailey's mind . . .") Mr. Lytle's eyes sparkled with the thrills he

knew were coming. Now and then he could not contain himself and would burst out laughing as he read one perfect comic line after another.

On other nights he showed a more somber demeanor; when he read James Joyce's "The Dead" in class, Mr. Lytle became very serious, indeed. I still have the notes I took on the night of April 16, 1959 (I found them in the pages of our textbook, Gordon and Tate's *The House of Fiction*.) Here are a few of the comments I took down that night:

"Parts 1 and 2: Gabriel is in his last and sinning state. Part 3: Gabriel is regenerated."

"The supernatural appears only through the natural."

"The three fates (the three muses) are the three women—virgins—uncompleted—living in death."

"Debauchery and asceticism are both forms of death, one by denial, one by excessive use."

"Age is dead youth."

"The head is the upper phallus."

"Trappist monks don't speak."

"In the end we all come to earth."

This kind of talk was an eye-opener to a girl who, before college, was widely read in *Seventeen Magazine*, and who thought she aspired to publish there.

Each night when class ended, the women students had to race back to the dorms to get in by curfew; we were aware Mr. Lytle often stayed to talk with the men after class, but the women did not have such privileges. I knew that Mr. Lytle often visited the male students in their rooms and talked with them about life and art late into the night. The men in our class boasted of this—and I was jealous.

One day I took courage and asked to have a private conference with Mr. Lytle. I'd been writing a story about a young girl who was deeply troubled and who spent a long hot summer crocheting a purple and yellow snake-like rope which she wound into an ever-expanding rug. I called the story "The Purple and Yellow Summer" and I hadn't the slightest idea what it was about. It seemed sad enough and dense enough to be "artistic"; I thought he and I should talk about it. Mr. Lytle invited me to come to his study at his house in Gainesville; he told me he rose before dawn to work, and asked that I arrive in the early morning, about eight. I distinctly remember walking to his house in the chill woodsy morning. Fall leaves were underfoot and the sun was newly up. I carried my "work" under my arm—never before had I felt so *serious*; I was a serious writer, on my way to have a talk with the great master.

Mr. Lytle showed me the carved wooden chair in his study; he pointed out the *ouroboros* on it: it was his favorite symbol—the snake eating its own tail. I indicated my story (which Mr. Lytle had already read) and

asked him to help me with the characters and "the plot."

"What should I have them *do*?" I asked.

He thought for a moment. Then he said, "Merrill, there is only one way to write: you must follow the thread back into the labyrinth; there and only there you will find the meaning."

While I was pondering this (in fact, I am pondering it still), a call came from the house. Mrs. Lytle needed help! The baby had broken a jar of peanut butter, and all hands were needed in the cleanup!

I became acquainted with the family, and made friends with the Lytles' two younger daughters, Kate and Langdon. On several occasions, I babysat for them. One evening as the Lytles were getting ready to go out, Mr. Lytle's wife, Edna, came from her bedroom to give me some instructions about the children. She looked beautiful in a stunning red dress; when I admired it she took me into her confidence. She smiled, and said (rather mischievously): "When a woman turns forty, Merrill, she either takes a lover or buys a red dress."

One afternoon, I met Mr. Lytle on campus. "I trust you have a story to read tonight in class," he said. "I'm counting on a good one from you."

"Oh yes, I do," I said.

"Good," he said. "I'm looking forward to it." I watched him walk away, feeling extreme panic. It was 2 p.m. I had exactly five hours in which to invent and write a complete short story! I remember thinking, as I ran to my dormitory room, "He's *counting* on me!" I sat down and began to type. By 6:45 p.m. I had written a 12-page story. When Mr. Lytle read it in class that night, no one knew the ink had barely dried on the paper. He admired the story publicly. He was proud of me.

Another time, I had written a story for class about a character I called "Crazy Harry"—Mr. Lytle was much taken with this story and told me that the following week, when he was leaving for New York to meet with his editor, he intended to bring this story, himself, directly to the offices of *The New Yorker*. Imagine my state of mind during his absence! All week I waited for a telegram! None came. And when I saw Mr. Lytle in class just after his trip, he seemed to have no special news. In fact, he gave me no signal at all. After class, I tapped his arm, trembling.

"Mr. Lytle! What did *The New Yorker* say?"

"*The New Yorker*? Oh my! I forgot about that!"

(That story, "The People In China," was later published in *The Florida Review*.)

It seems to me now that the students in our particular writing class (that year, that time, that place) constituted a sacred circle; we were blessed initiates in a mysterious and difficult art. Once the door to that small classroom was shut and Mr. Lytle began reading in his wonderful, expressive voice, a magical aura enclosed us. Many of us continued to



write seriously: Mary Ann Taylor, Sue Richards (who married Dick Richards, also in our class), Frank Taylor, Charlie Rose, Tom Adams. Others, Ted Srygley, Jim Degnan, Jack De Bellis, Bill Glasser, Paul Hunter, stayed in touch for many years. Three from that group (Mary Ann Taylor, and Sue and Dick Richards) lived in Sadieville, Kentucky, within farm's length of Andrew Lytle, for a number of years, all of them working and living as a small helping community.

In my first semester of graduate work, I applied for a small fellowship from the English Department to help with expenses. I asked Mr. Lytle for a reference; he said he'd be happy to write one. To my delight, I was awarded the grant. When I went to collect my check, Alton C. Morris, then the head of the English department, seemed puzzled. He said, "Miss Gerber, on the strength of Mr. Lytle's extremely fine recommendation we decided to give you this money, but now that I am looking at your transcript, I see that you aren't as brilliant as he said you are. Look at this—you had grades of C in the physical sciences!" With a look of extreme annoyance on his face, he handed me the envelope. "We hope we haven't made a mistake," he said.

The following September, I came back to the University of Florida to begin a job as a graduate teaching assistant in the English department. A day before the semester formally began, I received a wire from Brandeis University informing me that a scholarship for which I had applied had just come through. I was beside myself with confusion. My husband-to-be was a graduate student at Brandeis; I wanted to be with him, and to study literature, myself, in one of the small eastern schools. But I had committed myself to my rented room, and promised my services to the university. (Also, I remembered Dr. Morris' comment.) I went to Andrew Lytle with my desperate dilemma; he suggested that I search my soul (that cloudy labyrinth?) and do what was necessary. When he saw the answer in my face, he led me to his green Cadillac, drove me to his bank, loaned me enough money to buy a plane ticket to Boston, rounded up some students to help me pack and drive me to the airport. He kissed me goodbye and wished me Godspeed.

## The Festive Spirit of Andrew Lytle

*M.E. Bradford*

The number and variety of Andrew Lytle's gifts are astonishing. They reflect the wide range of his experience of the world and also his sense of decorum, of the relation of style to occasion, office to performance, which has remained intact regardless of the role he is engaged in. For he learned his manners according to the old regulation and has never ceased to observe the difference between the public and private things — the family, the world of *res publica*, and the kingdom of God. Yet from having absorbed and embodied these distinctions concerning status and function, from distinguished service as critic, teacher, editor and historian, he emerges as sometimes the most gleeful and mischievous of men, a festive spirit in any company, living out the Christian high comedy of which he is so eloquent and persuasive an interpreter: simultaneously sober and cheerful, serious and amused. He is by turns sage and patriarch, actor and "dancing man," churchman, raconteur and farmer — with the artist bringing all of the parts into unison.

Though I first read Mr. Lytle some years before I met him, my impressions of him are indissolubly linked with the beginnings of our personal acquaintance, with places, people and times that shaped those occasions. In his essays and the biography of Nathan Bedford Forrest, Andrew Lytle is a definite presence, an authority for what the work maintains. The same can be said of his craft as a maker of fictions, which imparts a sense of mastery and command that grows upon the reader once the complete design of a story or novel has been apprehended in all of its parts. But in particular I think of the special, immediate quality of Andrew Lytle as it is transferred to the printed page in *A Wake For The Living*, the chronicle of his family and meditation upon that portion of Southern history which interests him most directly. What makes real and gives general importance to the characters in this collective memoir

is that Andrew Lytle is indeed a commentary on what he has written, a special supplement to our admiration of his handiwork.

One way of measuring Mr. Lytle's personal impact is through the devotion he inspires in his students. About the phenomenon there can be no doubt. I understand it by way of a 1974 summer seminar for which we were both part of the faculty. I recall the evening when Mr. Lytle arrived, lighting up a room full of young people who had eagerly awaited his coming. What followed included music and stories, banjo and guitar playing, some country dancing and renditions of "Old 97" and "Amazing Grace." This mixture worked toward establishing a community of interests which Lytle invoked when he delivered a formal talk the next morning. Clearly the students knew they would hear from a different sort of authority, a lecturer who could distinguish the essential from the ephemeral: one who wished to do so, as a courtesy. They already felt that way before Andrew Lytle rose to speak his first proprietary word. After the previous evening, no one expected mere information. What came instead was prescriptive truth remembered in concrete instances—eloquence set over against the regnant follies of our day. Given the purposes he serves in such performances, there is no better orator than Andrew Lytle. Nor is there any doubt that the *argumentum ad hominem* is a central component of his purchase on an audience. Before that week of summer school was finished, a new group had been added to the long roll of Mr. Lytle's devoted following.

What Mr. Lytle brings in person to any setting, and especially to a collective enterprise, was made clear during an Agrarian reunion held at the University of Dallas in April of 1968. For two days of taped exchanges between the old comrades-in-arms and a little more "unofficial" visiting, Andrew Lytle kept the flow of conversation going, restoring among his brethren the social bond which was for most of them anterior to their intellectual cooperation in confronting the crisis of the 1930's. His memory of events that occurred when he was still a young man remained, like his principles, unaltered by the filtering influence of more recent occupations. Moreover, despite the handicap of Davidson's unexpected absence and the fact that the reunion came after a week of public functions, that memory helped to recreate with Tate, Warren, and Ransom some of the interactive magic which had years before made possible the achievement of *I'll Take My Stand* and other writings. When Andrew Lytle called his fellow Agrarians "brother," he meant what he said.

Another instance of Andrew Lytle at the top of his bent I cherish especially because I had a hand in arranging it. In 1979 Mr. Lytle spoke before the Philadelphia Society at its regional meeting in New Orleans. About half of the audience was Southern, and not surprised. But the significant encounter took place between Andrew Lytle and the remaining half—Yankee intellectuals, conservatives all, who could not imagine

that any such person might still exist. The title of his address was "They Took Their Stand: The Agrarian View After Fifty Years." But before Lytle read, he gave us an impromptu version of "Hog Drivers," the old song of the frontier, in response to Forrest McDonald's address on the Southerner as stockman. Singing in a clear tenor voice which belied his years, he called up the America of freeholders and herdsmen, of interconnected families living out of the land. Other stories followed: driving from New York to Alabama with Allen Tate and Caroline Gordon; visiting the back country near Tupelo, Mississippi.

The Agrarians, Lytle concluded, had not communicated their sense of urgency to the audience which they addressed in the 1930's because very few then "could imagine the world they were born in, had lived in, and were still living in, could disappear." He observed ruefully that the Agrarians were "better prophets" than they knew. Of course, as Southerners could remember in 1930, there had been a time before the country betrayed itself out of the delusion of progress and the dream of the protective state; a time when men and women knew who and what they were through long tenure in a fixed place and through common recollections.

They belonged to a corporate order we once called Christendom. Mr. Lytle lives there now. Which is why he referred to himself in New Orleans as a "ghostly presence," or at least one reason for that self-description. But he was very real to my Northern friends who heard him that day—a whole man, speaking cheerfully that Word which will in the end prevail.

When I find it hard to call up the world my fathers knew, the ancestral things and the bygone connection between this commonwealth and the City of God, I think of Andrew Lytle and his work. His presence among us, both as a man and creative artist, is a continuing joy and blessing.

## Andrew Lytle and "What's-on-the-Desk"

*Smith Kirkpatrick*

Where John Crowe Ransom learned to teach what's-on-the-desk, I don't know. Certainly his Oxford experience with the Christopher Morley Group evolved at Vanderbilt from discussing aesthetics in the abstract into discussing the aesthetics of the Fugitives' poetry, which later evolved into the aesthetics of New Criticism. But whatever the origin of teaching what's-on-the-desk, his students never forgot it. Study with a good teacher for more than one semester and inevitably the student studies the "how" as well as the "what." As in the other arts, the two are inseparable.

At the University of Florida in the fifties, Andrew Lytle was a total practioner of teaching what's-on-the-desk. He came to the University of Florida in 1948 to install a fiction writing program, and he stayed until 1961. Not long ago he allowed the University of Florida to be where he did his "best" teaching because there he had graduate students and a certain maturity was needed for the teaching of fiction writing.

No other period in Mr. Lytle's life was more productive. At Florida he developed his own particular teaching philosophy, his own method of writing criticism, and wrote his great novel *The Velvet Horn*.

Although his first few years at Florida were productive, they were not easy. He fitted the writing program uneasily into the English Department, built a house, and taught an advanced fiction class whose students were later to author many novels, stories, poems, and several movies. His family was young and thriving, but the years were uneasy because of his writing.

The novel he had abandoned before coming to Florida remained abandoned. The dialect of the characters had so affected some of his relatives that they protested people did not talk that way. Of course they were right. People didn't talk that way except in Mr. Lytle's world of illusion

and imagination. The characters *did* recall the dialects of his relative's childhood. They also recalled the dialect of my childhood. They worked. I'm sure Mr. Lytle knew as much. He was searching for his subject and was too honest to deceive himself with talented displays. So he blamed the dialect and suffered through that terrible time when the artist is pressuring himself to grow and understand but without tangible results.

Both the pressure and suffering were extreme. One mild fall day he appeared in my doorway overcoat tightly buttoned and his hat tied down with a woolen scarf. "Boys," he muttered, "I'm not long for this world." He wanted companionship for the eighteen-mile trip to buy a few bottles of Heaven Hill. He was constantly "give down," and for a time lived on bouillon. He was the new writer at the new school. "What are you working on?" Privately he said he was "written out," was a "has been."

Too many moments belied him: his classroom enthusiasm and brilliance and one evening special to me: on my thirtieth birthday he crossed his arms in the middle of his livingroom, squatted, and danced a flashing-heeled Russian folk dance. Earlier that day he had been too weak to walk a block.

Returning to the typewriter took him to another level of searching. He'd accomplished as much as possible without putting words to paper — but still the novel's true subject eluded him, and only after Jack Croleigh labored up the mountain to witch a well did Mr. Lytle's life change. When Sol Leatherburg stepped from the mountain-top woods and recited his message about the tree, his message clearly illuminated the ever-recurring action out of which *The Velvet Horn* was growing: the tree of man rooted in Paradise standing for all to locate themselves by. The setting, the action, the characters, their dialect from the past, all the parts of the novel coalesced, and as the reflected possibilities of their meanings complicated, Mr. Lytle's energies soared.

With the novel's subject centered on his eye, he was Sisyphus beyond the crest, the novel pushed him. He could write anywhere, Jack's death speech fifty pages before he was shot, voices from the countryside before the buggy made the journey, and the last ten pages (condensed into poetry) in the single final sitting.

His vision possessed him. He would disappear from the dinner table to his typewriter. He rode clear-eyed down wilderness trails a hundred years old, and none of his students had more energy, more animation or enthusiasm. The words poured through his fingertips. Now the central problem with the novel was that Jack Croleigh, the novel's verbally gifted narrator, wanted the novel's action stopped.

Knowing his beloved nephew, Lucius, would be the victim of the action's unfolding, Jack used his considerable verbal power to stop the action which Lytle the writer sought to reveal. Only after Jack fell into a grave where he encountered the darkness of his soul and declared

himself through with words, only then did the pace of the novel change. The novel began moving so swiftly that Lytle said he was now only paraphrasing, would later need to "flesh out." Many pages passed before he realized the now-silent Jack had accepted the inevitability of life's unfolding.

Mr. Lytle's ego lies in trying to write the best fiction he can write. He believes that only the work can be controlled. All else — editors, sales, etc. — is luck or fate, certainly not something allowed to interfere with the relationship of the writer to the material. But until the writer's vision clears and he sees exactly his subject, the selection or rejection of details, the choices between words, the decisions of proportion and sequence, all are mysterious and dependent upon instinct and craft. But once the vision centers on the eye, the writer can discover his most profound beliefs in the material. Fine distinctions between words become enormous. The exact word shines among the almost exact. Sentences doing only one thing at a time reveal their dullness. The writer can more easily discover *the* story in the material.

*The* story is always Lytle's goal. Less than working through fictional problems cheats the writer, the reader, and the work. The results can be as deadly as they were for the half-trained Japanese pilots toward the end of World War Two. Instead of facing this problem, these illy-trained youths would sometimes attempt fancy slow rolls while centered in the gunights of our fighters.

As Lytle sought the ultimate in his material, so he sought the ultimate in the short story and novel forms. His stories are never limited to character sketches, to description, or to actions — parts of the total form and only capable of partial results. Ideally he seeks the ultimate in the material with the ultimate in the form.

Mr. Ransom's teaching of what's-on-the-desk, that is to say the reading aloud of whatever student works were waiting on his desk, profoundly emphasized the relationship of form and meaning and the fact that a work must inherently contain its own past. The student authors were not identified, only the work mattered. Mr. Lytle also used this concept, of a work standing alone, in his critical writings. Only in the most general way, if at all, did he read secondary sources. But if he liked a work, he read it over and over. He once said that, after graduating from college, he reread *War and Peace* every four years, which years later resulted in the essay revealing the novel's form and identifying, through an image, a larger ever-recurring action behind the action of Pierre recovering his physical and spiritual inheritance.

This demand on the work and self was also a part of his teaching philosophy: as he wrote to the limits of his ability, so also he taught and so he demanded of students. He made teaching appear easy: no grades, no tests, no specific preparation other than his whole life and talking, talk-

ing, talking with students. His preparation was seemingly reduced to the five minutes before class, *sit with me for a minute while I collect my thoughts*, and then entering the classroom to what lay on the desk—hopefully a story with all its parts and an ever-occurring past worthy of his fullest consideration.



## A Recollection of Andrew Lytle as Teacher

*Joanne Childers*

I remember that on the first day of Andrew Lytle's creative writing class he wore a scarf tied at the neck of his otherwise agrarian outfit. He had a fringe of reddish-blond hair, thin features, and steely eyes behind the glasses which, as time went on, he almost always remembered to bring to class. Although he was suffering from a cold, he sang to us a ballad, "Where are you going my good old man, where are you going, my honey, my lamb?" in a pleasantly hoarse voice. As he sang, he dropped ashes liberally on the material on the podium, just as he later scattered them on Katherine Mansfield's "Dill Pickle," Flannery O'Connor's "Good Man," and Katherine Anne Porter's "Old Mortality."

Andrew Lytle's creative writing class that I entered in February of 1950 was an undergraduate class of approximately seven young women and seven young men. Mr. Lytle also taught an advanced course on fiction writing, but I was a graduate student in Modern European History with a background in English provided almost entirely by my own spotty reading. Also, I was more interested in writing poetry than in writing fiction.

When I entered the class, I knew very little about Andrew Lytle. Before long I learned his biographical data: born in 1902 in Murfreesboro, Tennessee; educated at Oxford and Vanderbilt Universities; had earned his bread as farmer, editor, and teacher. I knew that he was married to the young and attractive Edna Barker Lytle and that he had fathered two, later three daughters. Andrew had written at that time *Bedford Forrest and His Critter Company*, *The Long Night*, *At the Moon's Inn*, and *A Name for Evil*. He was then working on a novel, *The Velvet Horn*, which Caroline Gordon was later to call a "landmark in American fiction."

I was, then, unlike many of my fellow students, ignorant of Southern

writers on the whole. I did not know of the Southern Renaissance in literature, its conservatism, its agrarian slant, its strong attraction to the past, its concern with family and community. Many of the writers of this movement, who shared a sense of history and whose forebearers had "witnessed the ghostly presence" of the Civil War, were unknown to me. I had never heard of the Fugitives nor had I read Allen Tate's "Ode to the Confederate Dead." I learned a great deal in a short time.

As I remember correctly, I was the only graduate student in the class. It was a lively group nevertheless which was enhanced by the fact that Mr. Lytle captivated us all. It was a friendly gathering, a class in fiction writing and not in world views. We soon perceived that the teacher was conservative socially and perhaps religiously. Andrew expressed his views in class, in social gatherings, and, of course, in his critical essays. These views, however, were divided from the art of fiction. "When a novel makes an appeal other than its proper aesthetic one," he has said, "you may be sure that it is written with the left hand."

For the most part Mr. Lytle treated his students all alike—with fairness. Old or young, Rebel or Yankee, male or female, it did not matter. I do not think he could be termed a "male chauvinist" even in theory. He welcomed women students and encouraged their talents with equality. At home he baked biscuits. After the sad death of his striking wife, I heard him describe himself as the "maid" for his youngest daughter, Langdon. At any rate, he was fair in his attentions to students. Not to contradict myself, I recall his remarking that "every old maid should be shook out in the morning." Nothing about every old bachelor.

The class was, as I have mentioned, a class in short-story writing. We paid some attention to novels, however, and Mr. Lytle spoke briefly on the subject of novel writing. I understand from my reading and his own statements that in his own novels he adhered to the principles of such novelists as Flaubert, Henry James, and Ford Madox Ford. In his foreword to *A Novel, A Novella, and Four Stories* (1958), he expresses what is said to be the sum of his knowledge: "Fiction is an action which tells the only story which makes of the form and the subject a single whole."

I recall that *Madame Bovary* was required reading and that Andrew considered this to be just about as perfect as a novel could be not because Flaubert was a "leaver-outer" but because of the union of form and subject. We also read a Faulkner novel, *The Sound and the Fury* being my choice, and wrote a paper on it. He had the greatest awe for Tolstoy as novelist and as author of "The Death of Ivan Ilyich." This latter remains one of my favorite stories.

Mr. Lytle did not read to us from his own short stories. Having once, in his salad days, attended Baker's workshop at Yale in the writing of plays, and having once acted on the legitimate stage, he read beautiful-

ly and skillfully. We heard the stories of Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, James Joyce, Caroline Gordon, as well as others in the Brooks and Warren text. While I have long forgotten the social and economic history of England and the dates of the Russo-Turkish wars which I was also studying at that time, I have not forgotten Katherine Mansfield's phoney ex-lover (male) of the protagonist in the "Dill Pickle" nor the way Mansfield's "wash basket squeaked" in another of her stories. I remember the rusty bicycle pump in the yard of a Dublin home in Joyce's "Araby" and how the entrance to Caroline Gordon's woods was "spectacular."

This teacher gave minute attention to the craft of fiction. That is to say, we were taught that our stories should adhere to a point of view (as per Lubbock) and should contain an "enveloping action." As I recall, a definite character-change in the protagonist was necessary for complete success. One might say Mr. Lytle preferred stories with a sense of history, manners, and mores.

Thematically, Mr. Lytle appreciated a story with a sense of good and evil. He understood and interpreted the stories of Flannery O'Connor with genius. He knew a Christian vision when he saw one. The theme of the Garden of Eden, the fall and redemption, was not neglected. Minor regionalism was not quite so worthy. Love was important. Then, too, there was the wonderful world of symbolism which heretofore had not consciously existed for me.

Mr. Lytle read our stories aloud to the class in the usual manner of a creative writing teacher. This he did with kindness and respect, subsequently calling for discussion. One might say he used the Socratic method of questioning us to increase our awareness. "Consciousness-raising" is the current expression. We discussed literature and its sources, its meaning, its worth, its life. Mr. Lytle was not given to the "put-down." Only the therapy of self-awareness through our own literary efforts. I suppose he was high-minded in that a story had to be "worth doing."

Symbolism came to be a delight for the group. The fly as the symbol of death, the sword as the phallus, and the mist as mystery were among the many symbols which increased our enjoyment of stories on yet another level. Such themes as "fruitfulness withdrawn" and the "dead enriching the earth" could be enhanced by or even almost translated into the symbolic. Faulkner's story, "*A Rose for Emily*," concerned itself with that lady's thwarted love. A rose, of course, is not only a rose but a symbol of love. Perhaps Miss Emily was none other than our Emily Dickinson.

Before two months had gone by, all of us in this particular group had realized that we were not going to write a great American novel or even a Martha Foley short story as some of the students in his advanced class

did. Mr. Lytle very kindly allowed me to satisfy the course requirements with poetry. Although he informed me that he was not a professional poet, I found him to be a good and faithful critic of poetry. I liked writing it and handing it in to this discerning eye for the inherent symbolism of a pine tree or a frond of fern.

At Lytle's suggestion, I set about reading the marvelous, emotionally forceful poetry of Robert Penn Warren. Allen Tate, too, engrossed me from cover to cover. I found him intellectually forceful if not always understandable. I developed a crush on John Crowe Ransom's poetry, thrilling to me, rhythmic and formal. The poets I read were poets of a high lyrical quality who had adhered to standards of craftsmanship by now outmoded and overthrown. The poets themselves are not. I became, at that time, a formalist.

I once, way back then, introduced my mother to Andrew Lytle. My mother allowed as how she very much liked "his story" as if he had only one remarkable story to his credit. He later remarked on her hat in a not unsimilar context. The story mother referred to was "Jericho, Jericho, Jericho," which remains my favorite of Andrew's stories. Of course, *The Velvet Horn* is the most excellent of the books.

I have read that it was after Andrew's participation in the Agrarian Symposium *I'll Take My Stand* in 1930 that he set himself to the task of learning the craft of fiction. By 1958 he had produced his four novels, a novella, and a small collection of short stories. The publication of *The Velvet Horn* in 1957 established Mr. Lytle as a great writer. It tells the story of the fall of man from innocence, his suffering as a result, his redemption, partially through grace, and his reintegration into the order of things. So like Andrew Lytle.

But I am not a literary critic, and this is not an essay in criticism. As a teacher, Mr. Lytle was intrepid, inspiring, humorous, and memorable in the year 1950.

## Andrew Lytle: My Favorite Archetype

*Joe Cumming*

Andrew Lytle took possession of my soul one chill-gray Thanksgiving afternoon before an open fire in the late 1940's. He was in Atlanta for a literary conference, and as a friend of my brother-in-law's, he accepted the invitation to join the gathering at my wife's family home.

Several of us present that day nearly 40 years ago remember details of what happened: midway through the turkey and wild rice, the conversation took a whimsical turn toward the number seven and how, of all the digits, it seems left out in the cold, an orphan with no friends or relatives.

Until that moment Lytle had been a quiet guest, a pleasantly responding looker-on. But when he began to explain, softly at first, how the number seven was the sacred number of the Druids in their ancient courts where poets held equal power with kings, the valence of the day changed. We realized we had drifted into a magnetic force field that was drawing us into strange, compelling landscapes.

For the next three hours, through the courses of pumpkin and mincemeat pies, the coffee and cigars and brandy, on into the living room where oak logs were turned to yield fresh blazing as the afternoon slanted westward, we were held spellbound by this man standing before us in his brown tweed jacket and green vest with the gold watch chain across it. His broad brow and deepset eyes gave his head the look of a Roman bust as he stood there in front of the fire, balanced lightly forward like an old boxer, courtly and smiling, respectful of the social nature of the occasion as if he would yield the floor whenever his listener's interest lagged. But his listeners remained enthralled to the hypnotic flow of words and ideas, to the hushed intensity of his voice and his style of prolonging certain words as if in lingering love of the sound and meaning, the way Italians gather the breath of music into their thanks when they

say "grazie."

From the Druids and the number seven he took us through the haunting esoterica of Frazier's *The Golden Bough* and the interconnectedness of magic, myth, ritual and art. We walked through the valley of the shadow of the world's great literature and ended lying on the battlefield with Tolstoy's Prince Andre of *War and Peace*, when the wounded Russian opened his eyes and looked up at Napoleon on his horse looming above him with the sky beyond and he saw how insignificant this world-conqueror seemed against the eternal blue of the heavens.

Under Lytle's spell that afternoon I glimpsed for the first time those wider-than-worldly horizons of mythic reality, and grasped the implications in the more-than-cousinly relationship between symbol and substance.

This vision of hidden meaning has remained with me like a secret treasure map that I have been exploring and seeking to understand ever since. The exploration has been made interesting by contradictions between some of Lytle's themes and what my own experience and instincts tell me. But there he is, an unshakable presence in my mind, my Jungian archetype of the wise old man.

Andrew Lytle was editor of the *Sewanee Review* when I came as a student to the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee in 1943. He was a literary legend even then, before he had written *A Name for Evil*, *The Velvet Horn*, *A Wake for the Living*. I was a 17-year-old freshman, nervous and excited to find myself, one Saturday night shortly after matriculating, in a coterie of students shepherded by a merry-eyed, snorting Falstaff of an English professor named Abbott Martin on the way to a rendezvous with Andrew Lytle at Clara's, the roadside tavern popular with students and faculty. We students were impressed—as they intended we should be—with the way Abbo and Andrew took charge of the operation of putting several tables together in the festive confusion of the backroom at Clara's. And I was all but overcome with admiration at the practiced and elegant stealth with which Mr. Lytle poured dollops of bourbon from a brown-bagged bottle into tumblers he held below the rim of the table.

I had never heard of the Fugitive-Agrarians when I came out of Augusta, Georgia, that curtain-blowing summer of wartime dislocations. And long before I learned that Andrew Lytle was an important figure in this movement of Southern writers and critics, before I had been drawn into the resonant truths (and Quixotic absurdities) of the group's 1930 manifesto *I'll Take My Stand*, I encountered the full power of Andrew Lytle's fiction.

It happened one afternoon in the library at Sewanee where I had plumped down for my routine battle between study and sleepiness. My heavy-lidded eyes saw his name on a book on a nearby shelf. I plucked it out, intending only to heft it for a few seconds of procrastination. It was *The Long Night*. I read the first sentence: His voice stopped as a clock might stop.

An hour later I came to myself, having been wholly caught up in the dark tale of family revenge in the years around the Civil War.

The same thing happened when I found *At the Moon's Inn* in the ward room of the ship I was on in the navy. I was lifted out of time by the seamless prose of Lytle, lost in the world of glinting armor of DeSoto and his men, sweating through the forests of 16th century America as my own ship lumbered westward in the Pacific to sweep up after the victory America had just won over Japan.

These two novels served to heighten my interest in Lytle and the Fugitive-Agrarians when I went back to Sewanee for my senior year in 1946. I began to learn about this famous group that flourished at Vanderbilt in the 1920s. The first essay I read in *I'll Take My Stand* was Lytle's "The Hind Tit," which I still think is the best of the lot and comes closest to expressing the common themes of the group. I read other essays and books like Donald Davidson's *Attack on the Leviathan*. Also, it was possible to pick up clues on the personality and style of these brilliant, complex, outrageously well-educated intellectuals from the upper South by listening to the innuendoes and ironies that winked off the casual talk of Allen Tate, then editor of the *Sewanee Review*, his visiting friends, his wife Caroline Gordon, who taught a course that year.

It was exciting for us—students interested in literature—to feel we were catching a glimpse of the tail of a comet whose course had burned a permanent record in American cultural history. Embracing their programs was another matter. It was easy enough to associate with their chauvinistic stance of defiance and protest of the colonial status forced on the South, to decry the commercial exploitation and spiritual debasement by the industrial north, to rage against the unfair freight rates imposed by federal regulatory agencies, to despair at the mass production culture imposed by the national ethic.

And we had no trouble endorsing the importance of civility, of custom and ceremony in human conduct. This was deeply rooted in Sewanee tradition.

But their political philosophy was very conservative, and in the South at that time, that label was identified with racism and racist demagoguery, the sort of non-progressive attitude that did not fit the

postwar mood of college students. That was the year a young Herman Talmadge, scion of a Georgia political dynasty built on racism, usurped the governor's office on an electoral technicality and used state troopers to keep outgoing governor Ellis Arnall from occupying his office space. Ellis Arnall, incidentally a Sewanee graduate, had built a record of progress and reform. He even made headway in abolishing the unfair freight rates.

Yet, at a deeper philosophical level, beyond the reach of current issues, I could sense some profound truth lurking in the literary vision of Lytle and the others. I didn't understand it, but I knew it was important. Then came the Thanksgiving apocalypse which set me on a life quest to find out more about this deeper meaning.

Even as I headed into job, marriage and parenthood I pursued the vision. I subscribed to the *Sewanee Review*; I read, I pondered, I puzzled. What did Andrew mean when he wrote that Western man had been off the track ever since Descartes spent that hot day in his tent? And what level was involved—psychological or spiritual—in the theme of the perilous separation of head and heart that was mentioned so often in essays, in the poems of John Crowe Ransom (as explained in critical essays)? And what was Tate getting at in his essay "Narcissus as Narcissus" on his poem "Ode to the Confederate Dead" when he said it was about "solipsism" and then went on to say he didn't really know a lot about "solipsism" but that the poem was about "preoccupation with self."

While I wrestled with my own bewilderment, I was still beguiled by the idea of defiance and, subconsciously, the bittersweet of defeat. I don't know if I can blame the Fugitives but I will confess that I voted for Strom Thurmond, Dixiecrat candidate for president in 1948.

But my life experience at this time was leading me away from this stance with its defense of "our way of life," the core of which was segregation. I was working for my uncle in a building supply business located on the edge of a black ghetto. This put me in touch with the rag and bone shop of real life. I could see the indignities that the system laid on blacks. In a Confederate Memorial Day address I delivered in 1955 I tried to extol the good qualities of "our way of life" as existing apart from segregation. I drew heavily on the Fugitive-Agrarian dogma. But the exercise put a strain on my intellectual circuitry.

It was a farewell speech to Augusta. The next year we moved to Atlanta. The civil rights conflict was beginning and I was lucky to get a job as a reporter with *Newsweek*, covering the South—the perfect place for observing sympathetically the struggle of blacks to achieve full citizenship. As a reporter, a Southerner, I could avoid the painful existential decision to either join the movement or sit in a coward's silence.



As the action in civil rights increased, people were being forced to take sides and something told me which side the Fugitive-Agrarians would be on. Sure enough, in my first year with *Newsweek* I covered the trail of 15 men from Clinton, Tennessee, charged with bombing a school. And, there on the battlements, making a holy cause of the defense, was Donald Davidson, head of the English department at Vanderbilt, one of the heavyweights of the Fugitive-Agrarians, a man whose books I had read and whose poems I admired.

Andrew moved back to his log house in the Monteagle Assembly, six miles north of Sewanee. He began teaching again, and again became a legend to a new generation of students. Emily and I would occasionally find ourselves passing near Monteagle and we would drop in for a visit with Andrew, Edna and their children, on through the years until it was only Andrew.

These visits were rich and memorable; we always stayed for hours when we meant only to stop by just to say hello. The log house—in no way a cabin, with its family portraits and fine old furniture and silver goblets used for serving good whiskey to guests—seemed to get mellowed with the years with its wrap-around porch and hammock, its ancient fireplaces and, more recently, wood stoves and overpowering stacks of firewood outside. The talk and the tale-telling were always good. Sometimes a student with a guitar might be a visitor and we would get into singing and once, I remember, into a bit of mountain stomp dancing.

Whatever storm of public debate over civil rights was raging at the time, it never blew through the well-chinked logs. Civility prevailed, through Andrew would occasionally flick a benign barb at my calling; journalism was never granted high status among the Agrarians. This was part of a definite snootiness they could not suppress. It had other expressions. For example, they considered the agrarian tradition of middle Tennessee almost in a different social caste from the coal-mining, industrialized east Tennessee with its Chattanooga smoke stacks and federally operated TVA.

On one visit in the mid-60's Emily had been reading a new book by Ralph McGill while I drove. The book was called *The South and the Southerner*, its dust jacket a dark and unusual shade of green.

"Hey, we'd better cover up that book," I said as we parked to go in, knowing Andrew would give us a hard time for reading McGill, the liberal prophet of the South, publisher of the *Atlanta Constitution*. She tossed her pocketbook on top of the volume so that neither the title nor the name of the author was visible. Several hours later, after our visit, Andrew was seeing us to our car. He spotted the green color on the spine of the book. Now Andrew Lytle is surely a man with the vision and wisdom of a guru; but he is also a writer of books for publication and

he is not a bit remote from the details of daily commerce.

"Oh yes," he said, bowing Emily into the car. "I see you're reading the McGill book."

"Well, er . . ." I checked the seat and nothing was visible but the color green.

"Oh, that's OK," he said, his voice whittled to lethal understatement. "We know McGill. We knew him at Vanderbilt. That's all right. He couldn't help being the way he is. He's from east Tennessee."

As we drove away I remembered that McGill *had* been at Vanderbilt with the Fugitives. Later he had written affectionate columns about "Red" Warren and he was in touch with John Crowe Ransom about the problems Donald Davidson's militant conservatism was creating for Vanderbilt's recruiting of good English teachers. McGill had been kicked out of Vanderbilt for stuffing the invitation list for a fraternity social affair with all-walks-of-life names—a bit of mischief that the hierarch-adoring Fugitive-Agrarians would certainly have considered out-of-bounds.

Much later, after the civil rights story had given way to hippies and, in turn, to ecology, we had a relaxed summer afternoon visit with Andrew. Sitting on his generous porch I tried out the idea that he and his colleagues had, indeed, been prophets, as could be seen by the number of their once-embattled perspectives that had become part of the public consciousness—ideas about alienation and wholeness, of community and the individual against the establishment. Certainly, the ecology movement was echoing what they had preached with its concept of stewardship of the earth's finite resources.

Andrew politely ignored the whole notion and changed the subject. As I recall he began to talk of John Randolph of Virginia.

Seven years ago I enrolled at Emory's Institute of Liberal Arts where I studied Dante, literary criticism, history, philosophy. I produced papers on Flannery O'Connor and Walker Percy. These two years of study opened the doors to much that had puzzled me in the writings and talk of Andrew. I learned, for example, that the New Criticism, formulated by the Fugitive group, is the respected foundation of most of today's exotic schools of literary criticism such as structuralism, deconstructionism, phenomenology.

More important, this work at Emory gave me a beggar's peek into the cathedral of thought that Andrew and the rest dwell in. I now understand, for example, about Descarte's day in the hot tent: that was when he proved his own existence by figuring that *somebody* had to be asking the question. It threw Western man off the track because it set up an ego-centered way of seeing everything, a way that makes a separate object of the external world—this, instead of man and external things all belonging to God's order.

But learning all this kind of thing only seems to set me further away from their vision. It is in my nature and out of my background to rejoice in the Renaissance instead of the Middle Ages which they so venerate. I tend to trust its rambunctious vanity to provide its own correctives rather than rely on the cool (and theoretical) stability maintained by a starchy authority. I especially like the Renaissance for its failure to en-throne man over God. I call that progress, and I don't pull out my pistol at the world even though I recognize what Sir Kenneth Clark called "the fallacies of hope." For me, progress doesn't mean fallen man holds any serious hope for perfection under the present scheme. I don't see technology as inevitably Orwellian and I don't think efforts to improve the lot of fellow human beings through government programs is intruding on God's domain.

But then, I am still on my journey. And there, in the half-light, is the wise old man, Andrew Lytle, guarding some big truth that maybe someday my experience will lead me to understand.

## Conquest without Communion: The Liturgy in Andrew Lytle's *At the Moon's Inn*

Victor A. Kramer

Andrew Lytle's novel, *At the Moon's Inn*, published in 1941, is about DeSoto's exploration of Florida, an expedition which was theoretically undertaken to bring Christianity to the Indians of the North American continent. Lytle's novel, however, stresses the fact that something almost the reverse happened as these adventurers sought to dominate the land. Instead of acting as Christians, more often than not, the greed and rapacious behavior of the Spaniards brought about only loss, unhappiness, and isolation, rather than any kind of Christian union. While on the surface there is a good bit of rhetoric about purification for the higher ideals of Christianity, what Lytle's novel mirrors is the unhappy fact of ruin, loss, and death brought about in large measure because of the selfishness of men such as Hernando DeSoto. Lytle chooses to tell this story by including many references to God's work, prayers offered, and to masses being said. The presence of the liturgy, and how references to the mass are integrated into the narrative, is basic to our understanding of this complex novel.

Lytle's fiction as a whole deals with the fact that man's adventure in the western world has not been a happy one: too much emphasis has been placed upon man's sinful desire to manipulate and control the land. Lytle's lesson for today's reader, in all his books, is that moral issues are usually much more complex than we might be willing to admit, and this is especially so if we (as individuals) try too hard to exert our control. DeSoto is a paradigm of this pattern. Above all, man has to learn that he can only have a minimal effect upon the course of history, and, further, that there are forces (in nature, in other men) which are far more mysterious than we suspect, and that, above all, these need to be honored.

Christianity should proclaim such mystery, but in *At the Moon's Inn* DeSoto, so caught up in his own selfish view of his role as explorer and governor (even as pretender to be God) is portrayed as someone who is blind to such mystery. He is portrayed as a figure full of pride and self-importance. He acts almost like a broker who assumes that he can buy his way, yet what Lytle implies is the foolhardiness of such assumptions. Integral to this tragic narrative are places where the Mass is part of the action, or is discussed.

As the central liturgical moment in Christian worship the Mass should function as a means of bringing mankind together. Of its essence is communion. Lytle, however, arranges matters within this novel to demonstrate that misconceptions about what the Mass is, and does, darken DeSoto's actions. For him the Mass is something, it seems, like the land and the Indians—to be dominated, and used.

Early in the narrative DeSoto makes out his will, and while Lytle, of course, realizes the full implication of what is ironically revealed as DeSoto emunerates how various Masses should be said upon his death, the character cannot know that his presumptuous words reveal mistaken assumptions. Lytle reminds the reader that one does not buy a ticket to salvation.

Tovar, one of DeSoto's main lieutenants, is an important secondary figure in this drama. In contrast to DeSoto, he is portrayed as a character with humility. He has none of the easy answers of a DeSoto. Thus at crucial moments, as the novel proceeds, and we witness the bold arrogance of DeSoto, this is often balanced by what Tovar is learning about his own adventure in the wilderness.

The part of the narrative which takes place in Cuba, before the actual departure to Florida, is emblematic of the differences between the Lord DeSoto and Tover. DeSoto is clearly full of his own self-importance. Not so Tovar who is a figure who admits his need of grace.

One scene traces an evening in Tovar's life when he had fallen into sin, a sin of concupiscence. Lytle tells us that Tovar anxiously sought a priest. It is at about the same time in the novel that attention is lavished by DeSoto in the preparation of his will, elaborate plans for the machinery of the church to save him:

"First, I command, should God take me from this present life on the sea, that my corpse be so disposed that it may be taken to the land wheresoever our Lord shall be pleased it shall come to port, and should a church be there or should one there be built, that it be deposited therein until such time as there are arrangements for taking it to Spain, to the city of Xerez, near Badajoz, where it be consigned to the sepulchre where lies my mother, in the Church of San Miguel." He paused.

The scratch of the quills filled the air with petulant haste. . . . "And in that church I order that of my goods a site and place be bought where a chapel be built that shall have for its invocation Our Lady of the Conception, in which edifice and work I desire there be expended two thousand ducats, one thousand five hundred in the structures and enclosure, and five hundred in an altar piece, representing the same Invocation of Our Lady of the Conception; and I order that vestments be made. . . .

"Also, I order that on the day my body is interred, it be followed by the curas and the clergy of the parishes, with their crosses, and by the orders there may be in the city aforesaid, and that there be paid them what is customary. And I require that each cura, with the clergy of his church, sing a Mass on that day, and they be paid what is usual. And I order that on the same day thirty Masses be said for me and that there be paid therefor what is customary.

"Also, I order that there be said twenty Masses of requiem in the said chapel, for the soul of the Captain Companon, and that what is usual be paid for them.

"Also, that there be said twenty Masses of Our Lady of the Conception.

"Also, I order that there be said ten Masses of the Holy Ghost in the chapel.

"Also, ten Masses of All Saints.

"Also, I order that ten Masses be said. . . ."

The contrast between Tovar and DeSoto is a foreshadowing of much of what follows in the novel as DeSoto plunges into his "pacification" of the land called Florida. This is a Renaissance man who, in Lytle's opinion, has turned his back on what is truly valuable—love of God and love of woman—so that he can gamble for the possible winning of control of a continent. Already early in the novel's structure, at the end of the opening section, when DeSoto and his wife had been reunited, it is clear from DeSoto's details that DeSoto was paying little attention to her as a person. And when he then forces her to have sexual relations with him, it is a prelude to the emptiness of the book as a whole. This is repeated in the scene when he leaves her on the shores of Cuba, unsure why she seems unhappy, and then echoed in the moment when he does arrive at Florida, somewhat surprised that he has no unique emotions.

What Lytle seems to be saying is that we cannot force our will. Instead we have to learn to bend our wills to the greater will. This is a

hard lesson though, and not one to be learned by DeSoto while alive. He thinks that he really can control things.

A crucial event in the book is the day when a guide (a Spaniard held captive by Indians for twelve years) is introduced to DeSoto's party, and a Mass is offered for him and also for the success of the actions to follow. This is an extended central passage within the novel, and Lytle's use of references to particular parts of the Mass is significant. This could be examined in great detail. Even more important for the structure of the novel is the way Lytle arranges the narrative so that as the Mass is reported the memories of the earlier capture, and subsequent ceremonies of the Indian capturers, are also included. In this part of the novel by means of this elaborate juxtaposition, Lytle, in effect, tells the reader that the ways of Indians, assumed to be barbaric, are in fact much more complex, sophisticated, and, indeed, humane than those of the "Christian" Spaniards. This is not said directly. The point is, however, that Alvaro Nieto is alive precisely because a communion of sorts had been established with his captors, indeed by those Indian captors, in those earlier years.

The imagined action of this novel which follows is a report of the subsequent ensnarement of the Indians and the eventual undoing of DeSoto. Lytle suggests in these subsequent parts of the novel that this is only possible because the Indians were either too trusting or deceived.

As the book proceeds, its pace becomes rushed, various military maneuvers are planned so that the Indians will be overcome, and we fully realize that DeSoto has little respect for the people he has chosen to "pacify." Just as the Mass, said at the moment of the guide's arrival when performed by Father Francisco (and he does think of it as a performance), is largely abstract prayer or lip service, so as the pace of the book intensifies the religious practices become more and more perfunctory.

As the actual march and the desired pacification develop, the pace of the book increases. The divine Office is still said: Terce or Lauds are often referred to as the narrative continues, but there seems to be less and less time for proper appreciation, either of the beauty of the people to be conquered and the beauty of the land, or appreciation for the true meaning of Christian worship.

There are, of course, exceptions to this. Tovar, who is more meditative than DeSoto, does see the beauty of the land. Yet he is the exception: DeSoto is the Lord of this campaign. For DeSoto the basic idea seems to be that the power of the Indians *must*, and will, be broken. It makes no difference if these pagans have souls, for there is in the novel no time to save souls. There is only time to calculate how to bring about a successful pacification. Thus DeSoto will participate in "heathen rites" if they will serve his ends. He does not act out of courtesy or goodness.

He will simply do anything which he considers necessary to bring about the necessary accomodation and control—no matter the consequences, and the loss of life.

Towards the end of the book it is clear that DeSoto's magnificent plans have not worked, and even in the glow of minor military victory, the certainty of his defeat looms. His campaign priest, Father Francisco, realizes all this, and at a crucial moment within the novel the priest confronts DeSoto. While Mass is being said this priest stops at its most sacred moment, holds up the Host before DeSoto, and tells him point-blank, he must desist. Too much pain, too much agony, too much loss of any semblance of communion have been the result of DeSoto's actions. DeSoto, however, is outraged, and refuses to consent to the priest's wishes. Finally he refuses to admit he has done anything which is wrong:

"Heed me, priest," he said. "I believe it is God's will that this land be pacified. Pacified it shall be. There is your answer."

Now it came Father Francisco's turn to pause. The pause lengthened into silence. The silence rose above the crowd in swelling waves, wave melting into wave until all the world whirled in a great and billowing swoon. There in the center, upon the rise of ground, stood the Governor, pale of face but resolute in the knowledge of what he had done. He had given his answer. There was no more to be said; but he held on, waiting to hear the pronouncement of heresy, to receive the complete and formal statement of his peril.

But Father Francisco could not end his pause. Now that it was too late he showed himself to be thoroughly aware of the grave consequences of the situation he had forced upon them all. "Ay, then, it is nay," he said at last, in a voice so low that only those near the choir could hear him. With difficulty he raised his shoulders and looked towards the Governor.

"The devil knows how to wear the raiment of Paradise. With it shining and dazzling the eye, who will look for the cloven hoof?"

The words fell at his feet. He turned like an old man and began walking away. His steps did not falter, but they moved wearily and without direction.

This scene is a symbol of western man gone awry in assuming that he will control his world. Lytle's novel implies that this is a terrible mistake, and once we see that DeSoto will not listen, we know that disaster must follow.

The last section of the book is called "The Conquest," and it is the



ironic conquest of the continent over the bewildered Spaniards. At the end, DeSoto is dead, and they are all "at the moon's inn," which is to say, alone and treated just as any other person as they sleep under the stars.

The concluding pages of this book are about the confusion which followed upon the death of DeSoto. DeSoto, the lord of all Florida, had made the Indians to believe that he was God; but he could do this only through deceit and guile. Lytle's message, through the incorporation of references to Masses performed, but hardly attended to, and then in the conclusive Mass where DeSoto would not admit of his pride or guilt, is that we cannot manipulate and control without regard to others. For in the end, all men will be alone as was the great DeSoto who insisted on his "conquest." At one point in this book a character says "Peru is not Florida, but it has bred Florida." Lytle's implication is that greed breeds abuse.

We might do well to re-read history, and Lytle's fiction, and be reminded that conquest without communion is defeat. Lytle's use of the liturgy is a key to understanding this novel. Lytle's conviction about mankind's need for God, and an understanding of the mystical body, and the tragedy which ensues if we ignore this Christian fact, is clear.

#### Textual Note

*At the Moon's Inn* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1941).

## Lytle the Critic: A Further Note

*Lewis P. Simpson*

At the celebration of Andrew Lytle's eightieth birthday in 1982, I offered—as one of several tributes—a comment on Lytle in the dual role of artist and critic. (Later published in the *Southern Review*, Autumn 1982, under the title “Andrew Lytle: Artist and Critic.”) Reading again my brief remarks at that time, I find that they make the suggestion that Lytle's attitude toward the novelist as critic is paradoxical, turning as it does on the conception that when the novelist becomes a literary critic he imperils the discipline of his craft by making a “lesser use” of his mind yet insisting that at least a limited practice of criticism by the novelist is necessary to his craftsmanship. Through the self-conscious, meditative explication of both his own stories and those of other artists, Lytle indicates, the novelist comes into an enhanced awareness not only of his personal participation in the mystery of the imagination—in, that is, the numinous creativity of the storyteller under pressure of a sufficient commitment to the art of his craft—but of the identity of his motive as literary artist with the motive of other novelists. Consequently, as Allen Tate observes in his Foreword to Lytle's collection of critical essays, *The Hero with the Private Parts* (1966), Lytle “writes about *Madame Bovary* as if he had written Flaubert's masterpiece.” His “criticism is entirely original.” Showing no interest in what the professional critics have said, Lytle's criticism is not simply a “proliferation of other criticism,” Tate says; neither is it in any sense an eccentric criticism. It is rather a “universal criticism that takes its stance in a particular place at a particular time.” Tate, in other words, was completely attuned to the governance of his friend's thought and emotion, whether as artist or critic, by the same interplay of forces that indubitably governed his own thought and emotion: an increasingly desperate tension between the universal desire to regard art as transcendent expression and the vir-

tual mandate of the modern historical sensibility to look upon the work of art as cultural artifact, having no context save its source in a particular historical culture, whether this be a culture of the past or one that is momentarily present. In the essential power of this tension, I take it, we discern both the inspiring and the shaping force of Lytle's comparatively small but significant body of criticism.

When I received the kind invitation of the *Chattahoochee Review* to offer still another tribute to Andrew Lytle's career — and there cannot, I think, be too many tributes — it occurred to me that I might appropriately enough devise a sequel to my remarks in 1982, especially since at that time I did not know that the culminating essay in his work as critic would be published on the far side of Andrew's eightieth birthday. I was, to be sure, aware of the possibility that Andrew might at some point send me a lengthy essay in process on the last work Flaubert completed, *Trois Contes* (1877). He had in fact told me on one or two occasions when I had solicited something more from him for the *Southern Review* that he was engaged in this venture and had tentatively promised to let me see the result. But he was working on something, I realized, that he would not readily surrender to print, and I kept its publication in mind as no more than a sometime possibility. In the early part of 1984, however, the manuscript of "Three Ways of Making a Saint: A Reading of Three Tales by Flaubert" — obviously typed by Andrew himself on an obsolete hand-powered typewriter — arrived in my mail. I scheduled it for publication in the 1984 summer "Fiction Number," one of a series of issues, appearing in alternate summers, the *Southern Review* has devoted to the publication of essays on fiction together with the presentation of double or more our regular quota of short stories.

I do not believe that "The Making of Three Saints" is Lytle's culminating critical work because it is somehow better or stronger than other notable essays he has written over the years: for example, a reading of his own major work, *The Velvet Horn*, or his readings of noted works by other authors, including Joyce's "The Dead" (from *Dubliners*), Faulkner's *A Fable*, *War and Peace*, and *Madame Bovary*. The last, entitled "A Passionate and Incorruptible Heart," is a compelling explication of Flaubert's drama of the destruction of a fundamentally innocent heart — the "passionate and incorruptible heart" of Emma Bovary — by society. Lytle, who has a great affection for Emma, discovers nothing wrong with her "demand for affection"; she was, Lytle contends, undone by the "corrupt means" the "sensibility" of her world drives her to employ in her search for love. This sensibility — and the whole complex of ideology and emotion associated with what it represents — a modern, fully developed bourgeois social order — Lytle interprets as Flaubert's vision of the "second fall of man, the fall into history." The second fall occurred, according to Lytle, when in the sixteenth century the "entire

order of Christendom" was upset by the alteration of the "relationship between the lords temporal and the lords spiritual." The crucial signs of this change, Lytle points out, are the appearance of Machiavelli's *The Prince* and the execution of Sir Thomas More. *The Prince* is a supreme rationalization of secular power; More's death was the end of the insistence on the duality of the spiritual and temporal orders. After More, instead of

a theology for the whole, history, man judging man's acts, and explaining them too, became the reward of behavior. Gradually the world came to be looked upon not as the grounds for the drama of the soul but as the end in itself. The Christian vision dimmed. Estates became classes; that is, man was defined by his economic status, the heresy being that the economic man assumed the posture of the whole man, the Christian. The state is still Christian. It has entered its Satanic phase of false illusions. A part is taken for the whole. This is the oldest lie of all, appearance not representing reality. Man is made in God's image. To say that man is only matter, only a sensibility, is the subtlest lie of all.

Insisting, in opposition to Allen Tate's opinion that she is a "silly, sad, and hysterical little woman," Lytle conceives that Flaubert invests Emma with the dignity of a "nature incorruptible and inviolate." Although in defending the character of Emma, Lytle does not see in Flaubert's story any implication of an attempt to save her soul, it is plain, I believe, that Lytle reads Flaubert, without qualification or reservation, as a writer who is profoundly imbued with the Christian tradition as this had been understood before the fall into history.

In his later years Andrew Lytle has found in the stories comprising Flaubert's *Three Stories*—"Heriodias," "St. Julian the Hospitator," and "A Simple Heart"—what Flaubert himself, without acknowledging it, must have divined while writing them: a Christian resolution of the critical tension—experienced deeply in the imagination of the poet or the novelist—that existed in the post-medieval, or the modern, society of the west of history and faith. As viewed by Lytle in his reading of *Madame Bovary*, this crisis would appear to be doomed to end eventually in the annihilating fall of the creative imagination itself into the abyss of the modern sensibility. In his interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the last scene in Emma's story, Lytle emphasizes Flaubert's implication that its context is the transformation of Christendom into a spiritual waste land.

The priest and the atheist sit up with the dead body. . . . The

priest sprinkles holy water; the druggist chlorine solution. The priest says we will end by understanding each other. They already understand. Bread and wine is spread for their repast. Not the blood and body of our Lord ends the action, but the worldly bread and wine to appease their carnal appetites, as it diverts them from the smell of decay, which, being exuded by the dead flesh, becomes the final symbol of death in life, the description of the society that has undone Emma.

Yet Lytle has consistently held that as artist the novelist no less than the poet has the capacity to see what others do not see—to, like Yeats, see that the linear pattern of history is enveloped in a transcendent pattern of cultural cycles. The modern materialistic age, although it seems permanent, will yield to another cycle and an age of faith will return. Adapting the argument in his explication of *The Velvet Horn*, "The Working Novelist and the Mythmaking Process," to his reading of Flaubert, we are justified in saying that Lytle envisions Flaubert as, like Yeats, in the generation of writers that succeeded the French master, already a beholder of the "trembling of the veil" and a major prophet of the recovery of faith. And quite specifically of the Christian faith. Indeed Lytle reads the *Three Tales* as the embodiment of a vision of such a recovery through the rediscovery—never to be accomplished by doctrinaire theology—of the feeling for the drama of the Trinity.

The *Three Tales* all end in death, and the meaning of each renders the original properties of the Trinity. Although the enveloping action for all is the same, the form for each differs. "Heriodias," with its dance of death, Salome's dance, is informed by the First Person of the Trinity, God the Father; "St. Julian the Hospitator," Christ the Son; and "A Simple Heart," the Holy Ghost. This three in one, as they differ in their actions, reveals the distinction for each member, not as abstract definitions but as they affect the body of the world; that is, technically not by summary alone but through scenes and all the discrete uses of fiction.

Inextricably linked in their metaphorical embodiment of the Trinity, each of Flaubert's stories, Lytle says, "gives differing conditions for the making of a saint." In "Heriodias" the conditions are historical; in "The Legend of St. Julian," mythic; in "A Simple Heart," the lives of the ordinary people of the bourgeois society of Flaubert's—and Emma Bovary's—time. In offering the crudely stuffed, grotesque semblance of her parrot, Loulou, which she has come to associate with the Holy Ghost, on the Corpus Christi altar, Felicity fulfills, Lytle says, the "story of the

Trinity, of God, the Father loving the child, and the Holy Ghost the love that played between them." In the very world of Emma Bovary's frustrated quest for love, Felicity becomes the exemplification of divine love and attains sainthood. Through the power of the artist's imagination—in Flaubert's case this includes the power to transcend his former powerful counter-vision of modern man and society—man's fall into history has been redeemed.

In allowing for the capacity of the artistic imagination, I should add, Lytle is by no means unaware that the modern artist is heir to the Puritan heresy that the individual man may have direct communion with God; and thus may succumb, and at times has succumbed, to the delusion that he is the special object of God's grace. He has even fallen prey, as Walter Sullivan has eloquently argued in *Death by Melancholy*, to the ultimate heresy that he is God. But as he implicitly acknowledges this peril, Lytle assumes—perhaps feels he must assume—that the mind of the literary artist may be almost the last mind articulately open to history as a mystery that unfolds out of God. In no sense the confidant of God, the artist—if I rightly read Lytle reading Flaubert—may be the last agency of His grace.

When he was finally willing to release his long meditation on the *Three Tales* for publication, Andrew wrote me that he thought it makes a point. In truth it makes several points. I have more than a little fear that I may not be capable of grasping all of them, being too much steeped, so to speak, in the historical sensibility. In any event in this short interpretation of Lytle's masterly and intricate interpretation of "Three Ways of Making a Saint," I hope I may have said something that will lead someone to settle down in a good spot with copies of Flaubert's *Three Tales* and Lytle's essay before him, and let himself be possessed by the interplay of two remarkable modern literary minds engaged in imagining what the world is like in the deep twilight of Christendom.

## **“The Proper Use of Tools”: Making Lesser Gardens Habitable**

*Warren Smith*

Both by exhortation and example, Andrew Lytle has called upon artists to practice piety, piety being not virtue, but rather the active exercise of respect for the world as it is, or—for the writer—the world which ones artistic vision delivers up for re-creation. The gift of the artist, Lytle has said, is vision; what he strives for is a voice worthy of the vision. What is left is craft; that is, what is left to do after the discovery of a voice is to use properly that voice. And if all goes well, and if voice, gift, and craft come fortuitiously together, the reader who properly engages the artifact will find his own “imagination elevated to the intensity of vision.”

But while piety is not virtue—and it is not, else all saints could be artists and no bad man ever would—they are obviously related. Ezra Pound reminds us that “to use the wrong word is to bear false witness”; therefore, we can say that using the wrong word is both an immoral and an impious act. But beyond this essential relationship between piety and virtue, we can also imagine others: what of, for example, the discipline required to learn a craft, or the act of submission to a teacher, an act necessary to apprenticeship and full of humility and pride? And what of the role of poetry in man’s coming to know his own soul and in coming to know of his membership in what Robert Penn Warren calls the “brotherhood in pain,” a brotherhood into which language compels us but from which language alone cannot affect final deliverance?

These are perhaps not appropriate questions for such a time as this, a time when we pay formal tribute to one of our fathers while standing in his yet animated shadow. They are not proper because the answers are melancholy; and yet, what greater tribute could there be to Mr.

Lytle than to proclaim sadly that there is, using Hawthorne's phrase, "a devil in the inkpot" (this being the lesson from Lytle the artist) or that the cherubim still stand at the gates of the Garden of Eden with a flaming sword, forbidding re-entry (this being the lesson from Lytle the man). These questions and their melancholy answers are, indeed, no other than the ones he has been occupying himself with in these latter days. We hear them ramified even in the opening line of Mr. Lytle's "memoir for a society," *A Wake For The Living*, published in 1975:

Now that I have come to live in the sense of eternity I can tell my daughters who they are.

The confusions of the old man are different from the confusions of the young man, but do not both the apprentice and the master desire little other than to "live in a sense of eternity" and to know "who they are"? Do not artist and man both desire the same thing? The answer is yes, and in this answer do life and art, piety and virtue, master and student meet.

This meeting was made real to me one Saturday in late winter nearly two years ago, when I traveled thirty miles south from my home in Athens to hear Sally Fitzgerald speak on Flannery O'Connor at the Madison-Morgan County Cultural Center. When I and several fellow graduate students arrived, Miss Fitzgerald was not yet speaking, but was seated near the front of the large beautifully restored auditorium listening to an opening speaker, a woman from the University's continuing education department, who praised in an entrancing monotone an early feminist writer from North Georgia. The lecture ended with a flurry of sociological jargon about the writer's contribution to the elevation of women and blacks in the New South, and she found her seat as polite applause drifted through the hall. A dapper moderator opened the floor to questions, which likewise turned out to be polite—until a voice rose from a large, unkempt body on the front row: "Now I hope y'all'll forgive," the gritty voice began as the body spun around to address the crowd, "but I get pretty damned sick to my stomach having people tell me all a time how I should feel guilty for being a southerner and a man." Thus grabbing our attention, the man—who one of my companions told me was Harry Crews—launched into an obviously drunken but spectacularly entertaining and remarkably lucid rebuttal of the feminist's speech. I cannot recall the various points of his argument, but I do remember that when he used the word "bullshit" he drawled the first syllable pretty severely, to the obvious delight of the Morgan County women.

After Miss Fitzgerald's excellent speech, I ran off in search of Crews, having learned that he was at the University of Florida and had been a student of Mr. Lytle's. When I found him in the back parking lot, hob-



bling with a cane toward a late model pick-up truck with Florida tags, I asked him innocently if he knew Mr. Lytle.

"Hell, yes, I know Mr. Lytle," he said, again in that loud, gruff tone which was the only one I had so far heard. Crews' eyes trained on me like pistols, and I stared helplessly back. I do not know if my ingenuous gaze or some effect of the bourbon caused his sudden change in mood, but I know that when our eyes met his tone softened, and he said, "I'd show Mr. Lytle my stuff and he'd say, 'Son, you oughta burn this.' And hell, I was young, so I'd burn it! Fact is, he used to say, 'Burn it all, and if it's any good it'll come up again.' " I smiled and Harry Crews focused his eyes back on my face. I thought for a moment he was going to fall on me, but he steadied himself, reached out a twisted left hand to point at me, and said:

"If you see Mr. Lytle, you tell him this. You tell him that Harry Crews may have his faults and problems, but Andrew Lytle has my love and respect. You tell him that."

And without another word he shifted his weight, pushed his cane out in front of himself, and hobbled away. Crews got into the passenger side of the late-model pick-up truck with Florida tags and a young student of his own, a tall and strikingly handsome fellow with a deep tan and blonde hair, cast a wondering glance at me before he got into the truck and drove quickly away.

This incident dramatizes what is perhaps the essential element of the influence of Andrew Lytle and of all good teachers. The best teachers do more than impart knowledge. The best teachers make their students want to please them. There is a danger in this, of course, both for the student and for the teacher, but there is finally no other way. Apprenticeship is more than the accumulating of facts or even skills; it is, rather, the process of discovering that there *is* a devil in the inkpot and then surviving the discovery. If some come through hobbling, it is to be expected. It does not mean that either student or teacher has failed.

So while a great many writers have testified to the influence of Mr. Lytle on *Southern Letters* as if the creature "*Southern Letters*" could somehow rise and walk, we must not forget that Mr. Lytle's peculiar influence has been accomplished by being or having in himself something that his students have wanted. And that something is no less than his understanding that piety and virtue are not unrelated, that the artist cannot thrive on virtue alone nor the man on piety alone, that the artist cannot long survive without nurturing the man in himself. "You are learn-

ing," Mr. Lytle once wrote a student

that the artifact depends upon a craft, which in turn depends upon the proper and inspired use of its tools, and this in turn defines manhood, not concupiscence, though that is not to be neglected.

The best artists do not have to know this, but the best teachers do, and I doubt if Mr. Lytle would want us to forget that if we honor him at all we should honor him simply because he is a man who has regularly reminded himself and taught us thereby the essential element of his own manhood: "the proper and inspired use of [his] tools."

## For Andrew, in Celebration

*Marion Montgomery*

When Andrew Lytle was invited by our department to visit us as the John Olin Eidson Distinguished Scholar in English last year, the *Athens Observer* announced in its calendar of events: "Andrew Lytle, yes, **THE** Andrew Lytle speaks on the craft of fiction. . . ." The wonder and pleasure implicit in that emphatic adjective, I trust, proved gratifying to this distinguished gentleman, whose fiction and essays have not always been afforded the general respect they require. That his virtues as a man of letters have been long treasured by some is evident; that his audience will continue is assured in the writing itself; that it will grow is signalled by the increasing concern abroad in the land for rediscovering the grounds in which his literary virtues are built and to which he bears witness. It is to that ground that I speak, rather than to his work itself, and I think the most direct way to its recovery lies in recognizing its presence in the man himself. And so I'd choose to celebrate the fullness of person we name with respect and affection **THE** Andrew Lytle.

But such recognition requires, as he has taught us, a balance between private affection and public respect and deference, lest order itself—not only in the realm of letters but in the *res publica*—be set awry. He makes the point in *A Wake for the Living*.

Not to know the difference between the public thing, the *res publica*, and the intimate is to surrender that delicate balance of order which alone makes the state a servant and not the people the servant of the state.

The loss of a clear vision of this distinction erodes both public and private things, causing disintegrations in the social fabric of community and leaving a randomness in personal concerns.

Such is the decay some of us lament as "modernism," which Mr. Lytle has engaged at many levels and for many years: in his analysis of fiction as various as *War and Peace* and *Madam Bovary*; in his long pursuit of the meaning of family and community to be found in the history of his region; and in a culmination of those concerns by dramatizing family and community strengths and weaknesses in the most arresting of his own fictions, *The Velvet Horn*. And he has also given us more directly and more personally the sum of his long concerns in a critical commentary upon our world, *A Wake for the Living*. Here I mean *critical* in one of its special uses. For in sum the work is a joyful celebration of his own engagement of the diversely created world and as such a reminder that we are, as a society, at a crucial turning point in our relation to creation. His genial irony (witness the title) alerts us to the fact that much more is at issue than the memoirs of a distinguished literary critic and teacher and editor and fiction writer. The book is not simply a recalling and summation, but the continuing act of engagement. It is not a signal of the end of a life but a confident testimony of a continuing life which may be more fully entered upon through vision.

In the introduction to his lively *Wake* there is a key sentence, out of which we may discover the importance of the proper balance between public and private things. That same concern is, of course, rather central to that first collection of essays with the mischievous title, *The Hero with the Private Parts*. (A second collection is in the offing.) The mischief lies in the discomfiting reminder of our inclinations to Manicheanism through any idealism that overlooks the mysterious realities of life in this world. He might have reminded us that heroes are not divinities by speaking of "heroes with feet of clay," but that approach itself hints Manichaeian separations. And so he approaches matters of high seriousness with wit and humor to remind us of truths about the complexities of our existence in the world. The most silent of those truths is that the abiding concern for balance between the public and private things has more at issue than merely making community tolerable at our worldly level.

There are limits upon public and private concerns, then, a most crucial point, lest public things become an absolute imperative reducing community at last to a provincialism—a condition that seems endemic in modernism despite its confident commitment to the progress of secular millennialism. And limit is also important at the level of the private, lest as individuals we make that most fatal of mistakes, the one that tempts us to believe that each private person is his own and only true light. And so to that sentence in the *Wake* in which this complex truth is focused: quietly, confidently, and with an ordinate humility. "Now that I have come to live in the sense of eternity, I can tell my girls who they are." Telling his daughters, telling over the sad and happy account of

their heritage. But also sharing with us at the public level of letters, in the interest of our public and private good health. That is what his *Wake for the Living* is about.

Lest we misunderstand the fullness of the prophetic intentions of that work, lest we take as more apocalyptic than is warranted the funereal and elegiac suggestiveness of his title — this *wake* for those of us almost dead in life — we must remember Mr. Lytle's own act of living in the light of eternity. For words like *elegiac* and *funereal* are inadequate to the witness he bears in his memoirs. He celebrates and accepts both life and death, as at an Irish wake, though without that notorious Irish abandon. What that means is clearer from a personal recollection, which I trust manages a proper balance between the private and what may be shared in public. When Mr. Lytle visited us in the spring of 1985, he gave publicly a very challenging paper on the possibilities of "A Habitable Garden," a speculative, metaphorical reflection upon the world since Adam. He also read one of his stories, with his engaging wit and humor — those sure signs of a resonant intelligence. He redeemed the time between those public appearances with class visits and with lively engagement of students and faculty wherever encountered — mornings, afternoons, nights. And then his visit to us came to an end.

I remember, and shall, a final gathering at Crawford. We were a motley flow, a Chaucerean assemblage of God's plenty, including the very old (among them several of his old friends) and the very young, with the several stages in between. In the midst of the festive farewell, as spry as if young — which he continues to be — and kindly wise as if old — as undeniably he is — Mr. Lytle. Talking into the night with a range of high and low topics, with a genuine pleasure in our presence as only those comfortable with life can manage. Telling stories about a pet turkey, recalling those who have been his friends and companions and who are to most of us large and shining names in our letters. Later he sang old songs with us, deep into the May evening, with the crowd at last beginning to thin, but Mr. Lytle never wavering.

I remember most poignantly a moment, at the shank of the evening when the guitar was being passed around as we sang old mountain songs and hymns and worksongs, that my grandson asked Mr. Lytle whether he knew "I Am an Old Confederate." No. And so, sitting on a piano stool by Mr. Lytle, the ten-year-old led us — those of us who knew or half knew the words. It was a ragged if enthusiastic rendition. Our young leader anxiously attentive to the particular words, to getting them right because they carry a history he as yet does not understand but understands in consequence his double responsibility to the words: both for the history they carry and his obligation to come to terms with that history. The rest of us, variously incapacitated by voice and knowledge, seeing that very old man and that very young boy caught up by Troy and Roncevals

more locally taken. Despite our ragged show, Mr. Lytle seemed much taken and applauded us. Whereupon the boy withdrew and copied out the words, asking some of us in whispers how to spell some of the mysterious words—*Point Lookout*, *Freedman's Bureau*. At last he presented the document to Mr. Lytle, who received it with that dignity proper to receiving valuable gifts, with mutual manners as old as Homer. That was a ceremony near his leave-taking. How better conclude festivities? Back to Athens, then, and on to Monteagle on a Tennessee mountain. Back to the vegetable garden he had already planted, having already gathered his firewood against the always-coming winter.

At the last, he and I stood beside the car that would take him back to Athens for the night and then on home. A young graduate student seeing to that courtesy stood by. A dark night, no moon but plenty of stars, with the heavy smell of honeysuckle and privet, a new spring world all about us. We embraced and spoke farewells, knowing how tenuous if delightful in its wonder all this world is. I have not seen him again, but trust I shall. Meanwhile, I honor him for his delight in God's creation with all its rough and smooth variance, a delight that is his because he has "come to live in the sense of eternity." It has been his special gift as a man of letters to share much of that delight with us, whether we may have been close to him or not. Through that gift he will be long among us.

## Possessed by Land

*J.A. Bryant, Jr.*

In 1975, as he was approaching 73, Andrew Lytle briefly abandoned his native Tennessee and settled for a time on a small farm in the southwest corner of Harrison County, Kentucky, a hilly section on the edge of the Bluegrass, less than an hour's drive from Lexington. Lytle was never entirely among strangers in this his latest adopted home. Kentucky friends of long standing were glad to have him within easy calling distance, and a steady procession of Sewanee students and older friends from Tennessee and elsewhere came by singly or in groups to look in, "help out," or simply to visit. In the end, however, the Kentucky episode proved to be more misadventure than adventure. For one thing, Lytle had chosen to initiate it in what proved to be one of the worst winters in local memory, and the house on the place that friends had found for him was old and poorly heated. For another, though an invitation to teach at the University in Lexington was extended for the spring of '76 (which he graciously accepted in spite of the scanty stipend), a similar invitation for 1977 was rescinded when a regrettably scrupulous secretary checked Lytle's age and discovered that he had been three years past the University's mandatory retirement age when he accepted the first one. Lytle, already wearied by the rigors of weather and the routine of dirt farming, was understandably irritated; and shortly after that he abandoned his Kentucky retreat and returned to the house in Monteagle, which he still owned and still thought of as home. One suspects that he might have done so in any case, even if the University had been properly appreciative and the Kentucky seasons, hospitality itself.

Lytle's abortive Kentucky experiment was not his first effort to establish roots outside the land that had given him birth and thereafter claimed him in perpetuity. During the early forties he had made a more

ambitious attempt to do serious farming, this time on a Tennessee-Ridge plot in Sumner County, north of Nashville; and though his earlier adventure into a new territory had provided data for a third novel, *A Name for Evil*, it gave him no permanent connection with Sumner County's clayey soil. Passionate agrarian though he was, Andrew Lytle's genuine intimacy with the earth seems from the beginning to have been possible in a single region—one that in its entirety is probably meaningful as a discrete entity only to Lytle himself, *son pays*, to use the precise term of the French, who have a keener sense of place than most Anglo-Saxons. The domain that has come to be permanently his consists of a rough isoceles triangle set on end with an apex somewhere between Monteagle and Sewanee on the Cumberland Plateau and two other angles positioned at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and Guntersville, Alabama. This is Lytle's kingdom, and it includes sections of Tennessee's Eastern Highland Rim and the Tennessee River and such locally prominent cities as Manchester, Winchester, Tullahoma, and Huntsville. Beyond are temporary abodes, none of which was ever proved capable of commanding his permanent allegiance: Massachusetts, Connecticut, France, New York, Iowa, Florida, Kentucky. For Lytle, even Nashville, where he attended Vanderbilt and met and joined the Agrarians, smacks, if ever so faintly, of an alien climate.

Lytle's first book, *Bedford Forrest and His Critter Company*, and his first and last novels, *The Long Night* and *The Velvet Horn*, are all three products of this native soil, as are the early essay "The Hind Tit," his contribution to the Agrarians' manifesto *I'll Take My Stand* of 1930, and *A Wake for the Living*, the remarkable book of family history and reminiscences that he published in 1975. All these works are redolent of hills, meadows, and watercourses, the horses, mules, pigs, and cattle, the corn, beans, honeysuckle, laurel, rank weeds, and cedar that help to give the region its character; but more important they perpetuate the life of a handful of English, Irish, and Scots who in moving westward found a region too harmonious with the rhythm of their own life to be denied and so remained there to give it their sweat and blood and seed. These were Lytle's ancestors, claimed by the land almost before it had occurred to them to make a claim of their own. Like Lytle, they were where they belonged to be, to use a local expression, and no other place could finally satisfy them.

The marks of Lytle's own possession by the land of his fathers give "The Hind Tit" an authenticity unmatched by any of the other essays in *I'll Take My Stand*, including the ones written by such formidable advocates of agrarianism as John Crowe Ransom, Frank Owsley, and Donald Davidson. The polemic in this piece is as eloquent and as passionate as any of theirs, but both eloquence and passion in Lytle's essay derive their strength from seventeen pages at the center in which he



presents concretely an image of life he cannot bear to see pass away but which he has been powerless to preserve except in his fiction, a term which in its proper scope should include both a solid historical work like *Bedford Forrest*, the reminiscences in *A Wake for the Living*, and everything in between.

That image is not dependent on particulars, though Lytle's mastery of detail is one of the manifestations of his genius; and the image dominates his second novel, *At the Moon's Inn*, with that book's portrayal of Indian communities in the Southeast. The Indian's life at its noblest derived its character from two key attitudes which determined most of the passages of his existence and which he sometimes came close to articulating in poetry and ritual. The first of these was a sense of the world's concreteness, something the Stone Age Indian shared with the Stone Age Greek and with Stone Age peoples generally. The second was a profound awareness of "the mystery of the multiplicity of nature's forms, their intertwining and interdependence, the human and the animal, [that] made for a communion among all living things" (*Wake for the Living*, 52). Lytle seems never to have ceased to believe that the European invader could have reached (and did reach in some parts of agrarian America) a similar awareness, which if persisted in long enough might make him a worthy successor to the Indian, who lived on the land, respected it as a gift, and regarded all the other creatures who inhabited there as his brothers.

Lytle would probably agree that many Europeans, including many who settled in the South, were no more high-minded than De Soto and his band, who tried to justify what turned out to be a futile attempt at exploitation by claiming to have presented an opportunity for salvation to the natives. He writes of those Spaniards in *A Wake for the Living* that they came looking for gold and found themselves.<sup>1</sup> The novel does not quite say that, but it suggests that De Soto's Florida expedition revealed a deficiency in the Spaniards' character which many of the Europeans who came to America shared: that is, they were all content to live for a time as itinerants at the moon's inn, obviously not realizing the significance of what they were doing but remaining nevertheless for the duration of their ignorance at a serious moral disadvantage to most of the Indians they found there. The phrase "at the moon's inn," Lytle explained in a letter that he wrote to a still-unidentified correspondent during the course of composition, is an old Spanish one meaning to sleep out in the open, something an expeditionary force necessarily does; but it also means more than that. The moon is traditionally false, he went on to say (*fickle* is the term one encounters most often in literary contexts); and it is also the visible manifestation of the power of ancient Diana, the goddess who protects the domain of nature and punishes with death all who violate it.<sup>2</sup> The Indian had lived at the moon's inn for many

generations but had learned thereby to respect other forms of nature as coequal with himself in the universe. The European, by contrast, confirmed by sacred teaching (and perhaps by his own inclination) in a sense of superiority, could not conceive of making accommodation with a world he believed himself destined to dominate. Hence he brought destruction to that world and, until he learned something of the Indian's wisdom, to himself as well.

Lytle is no primitivist; and in his view the Indian's wisdom (of which he has a specialist's knowledge) was never sufficient. He recognizes that many of the Indian peoples fell short of acting upon the insight that was their chief heritage and that some even perverted it, letting accommodation with Diana's realm degenerate into identification, for example, those Cherokees who took to the woods and were transmogrified into bears (*Wake*, 49). This is the tendency that almost undoes young Tovar, the central character of *At the Moon's Inn*, who sees the beauty of the Indian's world and almost makes it his own but comes to recognize that all the world—America no less than Europe, the red man's culture as well as the white man's—is part of a fallen universe, to be respected and loved in charity as originally the creation and gift of a benevolent God but not under any circumstances to be submitted to. Thus as his companions tend to be engulfed in despair after the death of De Soto, Tovar alone manages to escape desperation and move forward once more into the light.

Some readers may find Lytle's Christian perspective troubling, but that perspective is the inescapable presumption of all his work, and it is basis for his sense of place and identity. He comes close to presenting it explicitly in a crucial confrontation between governor and priest near the end of *At the Moon's Inn*. De Soto had led his army north into the mountains of the Carolinas, along what is today's Georgia-Tennessee border, and down through the territory now called Alabama, all with very little to show for the pain and effort and certainly no gold. Finally at Mauvilla, only a short distance from the Gulf of Mexico, he brought them to a victory over the increasingly treacherous and hostile Indians, but the cost of that victory in men and in hope of success for the expedition was so bitter that it tempted some of the men to rebel. Even so, De Soto managed to maintain control and was on the point of turning north again into the wilderness when his priest, Father Francisco, called for a Mass of Thanksgiving. There, in the presense of the entire army, he ordered his governor in the name of God to give up the quest and return to Cuba by sea. De Soto was at first nonplussed, but his steadfast defiance of the priest in a subsequent confrontation, also witnessed by the entire company, constituted, as Lytle observed in his letter, a protestant and unchristian usurpation of the prerogative of God's holy minister. By that means the Spanish governor for two years more avoided

admitting to himself that the wilderness he had violated could and would take her vengeance, and as a result he lost his own soul.

The wilderness was always there to be taken by somebody; but De Soto, blinded by pride, saw in it only an opportunity for deploying his will. His adversary, the materialistic Indian, saw and respected the wilderness for what it was; but without the Christian dispensation to direct and condition the accommodation he achieved, he remained vulnerable to its seductive power. A closer approach to full accommodation with the American wilderness, Lytle seems to believe, remained for the later settlers—English, Scots, and Irish for the most part—who in their simplicity could respond like the Indian to the charm of the natural world but who brought with them a recognition of an Adamic responsibility to exercise dominion over it. All they needed was time to articulate in custom and ceremony their relationship with the land that had claimed them.

The consequence of that time, well spent by those latter-day invaders and their descendants, was what Lytle calls a sense of eternity, something that he speaks of in the first sentence of *A Wake for the Living*. The phrase includes a number of things: first of all, his own Christian perspective, with the Incarnation at the center of human history; second, a recognition of the American story, including the story of the Indian peoples, as a significant part of the larger design; and, finally, an awareness of "the identity between the natural and the supernatural, that mystery which becomes ceremony to people who make their living by the land and the sea."<sup>3</sup> The title of the book, however, betrays a fear, latent in even the most hilarious passages, that that sense of eternity has deteriorated in the present generation and may not be developed at all in generations to follow. The impassioned pleading of "The Hind Tit" has become the lament of one who speaks from and for a living culture that cannot be sustained or even comprehended by the deracinated thousands who now inhabit "the orderly slums of suburbia . . . made for the confusion of the spirit." The cities, even those that were the small towns of Lytle's youth, are already beyond redemption; and the industrialized countryside has all but ceased to provide any communion with the natural world that the Indian in his wilderness enjoyed and the early settlers and their descendants for several generations thereafter maintained. Perhaps that is one of the reasons that Lytle, always uncomfortable in cities, has found even farming in these latter days uncongenial. Even Monteagle and Sewanee may be threatened by developers and the growing epidemic of amenities that delude the senses and confuse the spirit, but in such places one may still take to the woods occasionally, tend a garden, smell the air on a spring morning, and sit by the fire in winter made bright by wood chopped with one's own hands.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *A Wake for the Living* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1975), p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Noel Polk, "Andrew Nelson Lytle: A Bibliography of His Writings," *Mississippi Quarterly*, 23 (Fall 1970), 45.

<sup>3</sup> *A Wake for the Living*, p. 3.

## Remaking the *Sewanee Review*

*The oldest literary quarterly in the country must by the logic of its situation have a position over and above the distinctions between its editors.*

— Andrew Lytle (1961)

### *George Core*

Andrew Lytle's career in the academy—in the mind of the reading public—seems to have begun when he taught at the University of Iowa in the writing program in 1947-48 before beginning his long association with the University of Florida, where he also taught writing. One of his students at Iowa was Flannery O'Connor (of whose fiction he would write: "She had made something more essential than life but resembling it"). Many others of his students, some of them nearly as good as Miss O'Connor, would distinguish themselves as writers over the years; and you will find tributes by some of them in this issue.

My subject is a chapter that occurred earlier in Mr. Lytle's long and still fruitful career—what at the time he and most of his colleagues might well have seen as a by-blow or mere happenstance. This story seems to have been forgotten by nearly everybody, including the old master himself. It involves his editing of the *Sewanee Review* from the fall issue of 1942 through the summer issue of 1944. I'll leave the full account to his biographer—and to Allen Tate's—but will limn the essential record here in skeletal outline, adding a little flesh and sinew to the bones.

Early in 1942 William S. Knickerbocker, who had been editing the *Sewanee Review* and running the English department at the University of the South since 1926, crumbled. His breakdown was psychic, not physical; but it could well have been physical—a stroke or heart attack—since he had worked under extreme pressure for many years and had been afforded little help and support. (At one point during the depression he was denied a new typewriter ribbon by the assistant treasurer.) Knickerbocker, who was behaving erratically at best, was a burnt-out case. Some of the stories in circulation about this period in his life—the anecdote about his being spotted, naked, in a neighbor's coalbin, for instance—are doubtless hyperbolic and apocryphal; but his general de-

meanor and behavior at that time are reflected in Dr. Johnson's remark to the effect that the pleasures of madness are known only to madmen.

The University of the South, especially the College of Arts and Sciences, was in perilous financial condition, a state that would not be eased until the vice-chancellor, Alexander Guerry, secured a V-12 program from the federal government (some of the barracks then hastily erected are still standing). Most of its former students were engaged in the struggle against the Axis powers. The United States had finally entered the war, which was going badly on all fronts: the darkest hour for England and this country, the Battle of Britain and the battle for the North Atlantic, was continuing; the Russians were in considerable disarray; and the United States was losing the war in the Pacific. This time was probably also the darkest hour in the *Sewanee Review's* long history. Like its parent institution, the review was threatened with closure; and the same thing applied to Kenyon College and John Crowe Ransom's newly founded *Kenyon Review*. The *Southern Review* had just been declared superfluous and dispensable by the narrow-minded and autocratic retired general then running Louisiana State University—and running roughshod over the greatest quarterly in English of its day (and perhaps of any day). The old general's notion of how to help "finance" LSU during the war was to exterminate literature and murder the chief adornment of his university: he accomplished the latter goal with draconian efficiency and ruthless speed. (In February 1945 Frank Owsley would write to Tate, with sympathetic insight and prescience: "I am inclined to believe you will not be harassed on your flanks and rear to the extent suffered by Red and Cleanth at the hands of the politicians . . . and the philistines of literature.")<sup>1</sup>

Andrew Lytle was prevailed upon by the vice-chancellor, a very imposing and persuasive man, to step into this unpromising situation and to edit the *Sewanee Review* in addition to teaching history. Lytle, who had recently taught history at Southwestern College in Memphis, had agreed to teach this subject again at the University of the South, never dreaming what awaited him. The newly appointed chairman of the English department, Tudor S. Long, was made acting editor, as was the established quaint custom of that day (Knickerbocker had been both, as we have seen). But Lytle, as managing editor, performed as editor in fact and practice. He put his shoulder to the wheel and did a herculean job, even though he wanted to return to farming and writing and even though he had a young wife and a baby on his hands.

In the wings was Allen Tate, who recently had not been reappointed at Princeton and forced, for several reasons, to leave the creative arts program and who was glumly rustivating at Monteagle, living in a cottage equipped with nine double beds. "I have never had such leisure in my life," Tate wrote to John Peale Bishop in October 1942, about the

time that Lytle's first issue was published. Tate was writing some of the best work of his life but was fretting over a novel that would not be finished and over not having a job. Anyone who knew Tate realizes that in such circumstances—i.e. when boredom and depression had him in their grip—he could stir up things mightily just for the hell of it. (William Harmon lately has said he was “one of the prima-est donnas of all time”; and Mark Van Doren long ago remarked: “readily enthusiastic, he could as readily be bored.”) But, as he reported to Donald Davidson in December 1942, since the early fall of that year he had faced “great difficulties.” The material side of these unnamed difficulties (which were marital as well as professional) continued until September of 1943 when he became poetry consultant at the Library of Congress.

Since late 1940 Tate had been campaigning for the editorship of the *Sewanee Review*. Soon after Knickerbocker's collapse—and before Lytle was offered the post, Tate was invited to edit the magazine; but he then responded to the vice-chancellor that he would not accept the job until contributors were paid. The university was strapped financially, and the vice-chancellor not only may have been unable to meet Tate's demand to pay his authors but may have also had moral reservations about Tate the man. Despite the advice of Ransom and Lytle to hire Tate, Guerry wished to hire Cleanth Brooks (then an advisory editor). Later Guerry's admiration for the *Southern Review* became public when, after Brooks declined his second offer, Guerry, at the advice of Brooks and Warren, hired John E. Palmer to replace Tate.

I am getting ahead of the story. The fundamental point that should be established at this stage is that Tate (sometimes forgetting that Lytle was an ally, not a rival)—continued to run hard for the job that Lytle had but didn't want—and that Tate decided, with Lytle's concurrence, in the circumstances the best thing he could do for himself and for the community of letters was to become an unusually active advisory editor. He did precisely that, with results little short of spectacular. But to what extent he was responsible for securing various contributions, and to what degree Lytle was, it is now impossible to determine. In any case they made a very effective team, even though both men were doing their work on the *Sewanee Review* with the left hand. In addition to the abortive novel already mentioned, Tate was writing most of the poems in *The Winter Sea* and some of his best essays (especially “*The Fugitive*, 1922—1925” and “*The Hovering Fly*”); and he was editing two or three books. Lytle was teaching and trying to keep his eye on the management of three farms, a job that would become full-time in the spring and summer of 1943. And during that summer Tate, thinking he would soon be editor, began signing some of his letters Managing Editor II and joking about the odd situation. But, as we have seen, Tate would go to Washington in September, leaving Lytle to edit four more issues of the

magazine—from fall 1943 through summer 1944. So Lytle's one year as editor stretched slowly but definitely into two years.

In their close collaboration Tate and Lytle decided that the *Sewanee Review* should be more literary in nature and less involved with the humanities in general than in its first fifty years. One of Lytle's first steps in this connection was to publish William J. Grace's "The Cosmic Sense in Shakespearean Tragedy" as the leading article in the fall 1942 issue. Knickerbocker would have probably run first the article that immediately follows—"England's Peril and Wordsworth." (We can assume that Knickerbocker had accepted most of the material in this issue, especially a long article on Thomas Wolfe, an essay-review entitled "The Sociology of Knowledge in the Study of Literature," and two travel sketches, one by Mrs. Knickerbocker.)

By the winter 1943 issue Lytle was beginning to put his own stamp on the *Sewanee Review*. He published the first short story in the magazine's history, "The Enchanted Bull" by LeRoy Leatherman; and essays by Arthur Mizener and Cleanth Brooks appeared, as did poetry by Wallace Stevens, George Marion O'Donnell, and Louis O. Coxe. From here on the essays and reviews that were not principally literary are either mainly devoted to World War II and its largest ramifications or concern southern history, especially the Civil War. (Lytle himself reviewed the first volume of D.S. Freeman's *Lee's Lieutenants* in the winter 1943 issue.)

With the spring issue Lytle outdid himself, publishing a long independent sequence from Robert Penn Warren's *At Heaven's Gate* (a novel which, when it was published in the fall, Lytle would review in the *SR*); critical essays by Randall Jarrell (on Archibald MacLeish), R. P. Blackmur (on Henry Adams's novels), Harry M. Campbell (on *As I Lay Dying* and *The Sound and the Fury*), and Solomon Fishman ("Virginia Woolf on the Novel"); and Richard M. Weaver's "The Older Religiousness in the South." The summer issue, with Tate's "Hovering Fly" as the leading piece; "Marcel Proust" by Harry Slochower, "Dickens's Dark Novels" by Lionel Stevenson, and "Artist and *Patria*" by Robert B. Heilman; poetry by Robert Lowell and John Berryman; and reviews by Lowell and Medford Evans, was nearly as good. The autumn issue featured an excellent complement of essays, especially critical articles by Brooks, William Van O'Connor, and Eunice Glenn; and cultural criticism by John Wild and Donald Davidson.

By now certain patterns have emerged and are continuing. A critical program is taking shape that is more nearly the New Criticism than anything else; the contributors include Brooks, Heilman, and Mizener. The articles by such scholars of historical persuasion as Theodore Spencer, Calvin S. Brown, Leonard F. Dean, and Lionel Stevenson are wide-ranging and lively, not thesis-ridden work that is narrowly focused



and turgidly written. The general essays on culture—such as Reinhold Niebuhr's "The Unity and Depth of Our Culture," John Wild's "The Inversion of Culture, and the World Revolution," John S. Marshall's "Richard Hooker and the Anglo-Saxon Ideal," and Theodore M. Greene's "The Necessity for Spiritual Revival"—are excellent. There is a tendency to stress modern writers; but several articles are devoted to Shakespeare, a few to the eighteenth century, and more to the nineteenth century (especially Wordsworth). Cleanth Brooks contributes two essays from *The Well-Wrought Urn*—on Pope and Keats. The few reviews tend to be devoted to war, the South, education, and new theories of scholarship and criticism.

With the publication of the winter 1943 issue, the magazine for the first time publishes notes on contributors.

Relatively little fiction and poetry are published during Lytle's editorship (good poetry and fiction, paid only by reprints and complimentary copies, are harder to find than good essays). All the same the short story makes a good showing—and for the first time—in this quarterly, and the poetry improves.

As time goes on, it seems increasingly clear that Lytle is waiting for Tate to take over. He has little time to solicit fiction and poetry and arrange for book reviews. Lytle is publishing the work of writers whom Tate apparently wants to cultivate—Heilman, McLuhan, Weaver, Brooks, Mizener, and Eric Bentley; Jarrell, Berryman, Lowell, and Stevens. (Tate would bring still others: T.S. Eliot, Jacques Maritain, W.H. Auden, Herbert Read, John Peale Bishop, St.-John Perse, Denis Devlin, Wyndham Lewis; Louise Bogan and Delmore Schwartz; F.O. Matthiessen, Malcolm Cowley, Joseph Frank, and Kenneth Burke; Peter Taylor, Katherine Anne Porter, Jean Stafford, and Elizabeth Hardwick.)

By early 1944 several connections have been established—with Harvard, Yale, and Princeton (especially Princeton, where Tate had been teaching from 1939 to 1942). Of course many writers associated with the *Southern* and *Kenyon* reviews, particularly Brooks and Warren and Ransom themselves, write for Lytle or Tate or both. Authors from the Vanderbilt faculty exert some influence. The near-hegemony of the faculty at the University of the South is markedly diminishing. (Tate had written to Lytle in March 1942 about the *Sewanee Review's* contributors: "There would be no point in taking it over as it is—a graveyard for second-rate professors.")

Tate would move the magazine in an international as well as a national direction. The influence of transatlantic writers such as Eliot, Auden, Perse, and Devlin who wrote for Tate is striking. Tate would also make the critical program more thorough going and more aligned to modernism (what he called the "neo-symbolist movement" represented by Proust and Joyce).

By the time that Tate's brief stint as editor had ended (he edited only eight issues under his own name), with his becoming the victim of his satyriasis and his hot quick temper, the *Sewanee Review's* critical program—modernism with a southern accent and a New Critical perspective—was secured. The contributors had been paid for the first time in the magazine's fifty-two-year history when Tate's editorship was launched with the autumn 1944 issue—and were now being paid competitive rates. The magazine had been superbly redesigned by P. J. Conkwright, one of the nation's best book designers; and its circulation had been tripled (Tate had also gotten it national distribution in metropolitan areas, especially in the East through the Gotham Book Shop). The general program had been established that would be followed by Tate's successors, including Lytle himself, for the years that followed, up until the present time. Tate would remain closely associated with the magazine for many years as advisory editor (official and unofficial) and as contributor, with his last contribution being a memorial tribute to Ransom.

In the fall of 1946, when John E. Palmer took the magazine's reins, he recognized Tate's achievement when he wrote: "I recognize that my first editorial duty . . . is one of reassurance: if under my editorship there should appear to be a break in editorial continuity from the pattern established by Mr. Tate, it will be the result . . . of failure of intention." He added: "It is our intention that the *Sewanee Review* should remain primarily a literary journal. . . . We expect to have a part in promoting an international community of letters." The foundation that Lytle and Tate had laid between the summer of 1942 and the fall of 1946 was solidly in place, and the war had been won in more ways than one.

One of the several ironies of this period (I will make no effort even to allude to nearly all of them) is that Lytle ended up editing eight issues of the *Sewanee Review* while awaiting the advent of his successor.<sup>2</sup> The chosen successor, Tate, did indeed appear and perform brilliantly (probably even more so than all but his closest associates, including Lytle, would have predicted), but, to repeat, edited only eight issues before leaving once again for the East—this time for a job at Henry Holt in New York City. But the important—the overwhelming—fact about this period is that Lytle and Tate not only had saved the *Sewanee Review* but had completely remade it from a respectable but stuffy quarterly meandering mildly through the humanities (of which the best examples were then the *Virginia Quarterly Review* and the *American Scholar*) to a leading critical quarterly in the vein established by Brooks and Warren's *Southern Review* and Ransom's *Kenyon Review*. Had the old *Sewanee Review* sunk without a trace in 1942 or 1943, relatively little would have been lost; the new *Sewanee Review* became an incomparably greater force in the world at large and the Republic of Letters by at once making and interpreting literary history.

The *Sewanee Review* now almost fulfilled Tate's expectations for the ideal quarterly, as he had defined it with shrewd insight and perspicuity—and with typically reasonable unreasonableness in the *Southern Review* in 1935: "The critical review stands for one-half of the modern dilemma, the pure half: the intelligence trying to think into the moving world a rational order of value." In the fall of 1944, in his editorial, Tate referred with exasperation to his own "The Function of the Critical Quarterly" ("nobody, including myself, would want to read it now"), and he went on to promise mainly that the *Sewanee Review* would not publish "official literature" ("by which I mean a literature not officially censored but spontaneously conforming to official beliefs, morally dead and quite sinister"). But, at the end, Tate promised also that the magazine would "keep alive the imagination and what it has meant historically," which is what it was then doing and has done since. It remained for Andrew Lytle to make his first editorial statement in 1961, when he returned to the *Sewanee Review* and replaced Monroe K. Spears. On that occasion, as Palmer had done in succeeding Tate, Lytle stressed the magazine's editorial continuity—as the epigraph to this essay eloquently demonstrates; and he went on to remark the quarterly's historic commitment—its "vigilance for language and language's finest expression, . . . literature."

## Notes

1. Much of this essay depends upon letters that appear in *The Literary Correspondence of Donald Davidson and Allen Tate* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1974), *The Lytle-Tate Letters* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), *The Republic of Letters in America: The Correspondence of Allen Tate & John Peale Bishop* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1981), and *Selected Letters of John Crowe Ransom* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), all edited by Thomas Daniel Young. I have also alluded to and quoted unpublished letters that are in the duPont Library of the University of the South. I have profited by conversations with Andrew Lytle and Monroe K. Spears on this subject.

2. Perhaps the oddest—and certainly the most mysterious—chapter in the remaking of the *Sewanee Review* involves W.B.C. Watkins (1907–1957), a leading scholar and critic who came to Sewanee in 1943 to teach and to edit the *Sewanee Review*. Watkins was a Rhodes scholar who had taught at Princeton from 1932 to 1941 and who by the time he came to the University of the South as an associate professor had published *Johnson and English Poetry before 1660* and *Perilous Balance: The Tragic Genius of Swift, Johnson, and Sterne*. Almost immediately after arriving in Sewanee, Watkins, himself in perilous physical and psychological health most of his life, collapsed of a vague nervous disorder and resigned before editing his first issue. Had this not occurred, Lytle would not have edited the fall 1943 and the winter, spring, and summer issues in 1944; and of course Tate probably would not have become editor; indeed the magazine might have failed.

## An Interview with Andrew Lytle

*Andrew Lytle held the annual week-long John O. Eidson Visiting Professorship at the University of Georgia in 1984, succeeding Cleanth Brooks in that position. He was interviewed ostensibly for publication in Stillpoint, the student literary magazine. Warren Smith, then the editor of Stillpoint, wrote his MA thesis on Andrew Lytle. Michael Jordan is now writing a doctoral dissertation on Donald Davidson.*

Warren Smith and Michael Jordan

Smith and Jordan: You have often said that the term "Agrarian" did not encompass all the ideas of the twelve men represented in *I'll Take My Stand*. What are those ideas, and is there a better term or phrase to express them?

Andrew Lytle: Well, I can't exactly say what the better phrase is, but I felt, later on in life, that Agrarian was too restricted to just farming. What we were trying to defend was the whole cultural inheritance of Christendom. Of course, farming is the source of all society and life because it's bread and meat, as well as other things. But we were not particularly concerned with agronomy or just farming, except to note that farming the land was the physical basis of all society. In fact, *culture* comes from *colo, colere, colui, coltum*, which means the way you till the ground, and around tilling the ground and working the land and growing fruit and crops and things, you learn and pass on from generation to generation the manners and mores of a given society. In other words, a shopkeeper will not have the same kind of manners and mores as, say, a peasant farmer. Out of farming the land grows the larger sense of what the human condition is.

Red Warren and Allen Tate wanted to entitle the work *Tracts Against Communism*. I went along with them because we were the youngest and the best friends. But that was too political, just as Agrarian seemed somewhat too agricultural. It was an attitude towards Nature: don't loot it, don't destroy it, but cherish it and cultivate it and take care of it because nature and human nature are all part of the whole habits of life.

Question: It sounds like Agrarianism urges an attitude very similar to the Christian notion of stewardship.

Lytle: Yes.

Question: But Cleanth Brooks has said that while the Agrarian posi-

tion is essentially a religious worldview, not enough emphasis was placed on religion by the original twelve. Is this true?

Lytle: I think it's true. You see, we made the mistake of letting Allen Tate write on religion, and he reduced religion to philosophy—the half-horse business, you know. Now you see, that was part of the temperature of the times. I can say this in defense of not emphasizing it too much: when you emphasize religion consciously, it's already gone. So obviously we had some sense of religion. We still operated out of a religious world.

But you see, we were just making a public protest. When we wrote, our backs were to the wall. We didn't think of ourselves as prophets, though now we seem to be prophets. The liberals laughed at us. They had pictures of us with our heads in mules' asses. They had us using privies. Now, there's nothing wrong with privies. Allen Tate said he didn't mind using an indoor toilet so long as he didn't have to kneel down and worship it every time he used it.

The main point we were trying to make is that without a communion of things—people doing things together out of a common inheritance and a common way of making a living—you cannot really be happy. As John Ransom said in *I'll Take My Stand*, the thing we do most is work, and when it's an evil, as the industrial system says it is, you work hard so you can take a vacation. But then you work hard there, too, so you never have any fun.

Think of doing one thing all your life: screwing this into that. There are people in some factories who do that. And some of them are manacled; they put a part here, and if they don't move their hands back quick enough, they'll get smashed, so they have a machine that drags their hands back for them.

A point I would make is that the creative process is the only thing in us that is divine. We were not begotten; we were made. And the artist puts into his artifact himself—not his personality, but the thing in him that is eternal. That's what God did. And if we become craftsmen again, we can restore the sense of the divine.

Question: So the critique of the Agrarians is that we have lost our sense of ourselves as craftsmen and have become—

Lytle: Specialists. Specialism. It's a terrible thing. It denies the whole body politic. For example, when I had my eye trouble, a doctor gave me something called diamox. It made me feel so bad that it was a heroic act to take my foot out of my bed and put on my shoes. So I stopped taking it. When I got to a doctor down here, he said the drug could kill you. Well, I knew it would. That young man up there in Lexington was experimenting on me. He said "Well, it hurts some people." It was a drug that was supposed to take the water out of the upper part of the body. Well, I said what about the lower part? In the body, you know, this is

not separate from that. The water was causing my blindness, and the drug was supposed to take the water out of my eye. That's the stupidity of the specialist.

Question: But we are pushed toward specialism from our earliest educational experiences. How do we resist this pushing. What kind of education should young men and women be trying to get?

Lytle: Reading, writing, and arithmetic, all the basic things. I suppose I received the best of educations at Sewanee Military Academy. I got grounded in Latin, four years of Latin, history, English, a foreign language, and mathematics. In college, you reach out into more private disciplines, such as chemistry and all the sciences. But all you get there is the knowledge of what things are and sort of where they are. You can't learn the whole history of the world in four years, when you're also doing other things. Getting to know each other.

There are three things you've got to do when you go to college. You've got to first discipline the mind. Then you've got to know how to drink. And then make love. Those are the three basic things in education. It's true. That's what you should concern yourself with.

Question: Make love?

Lytle: Yes! Courtship, and all of that. Your basic concern is to live in the order and discipline of a community. If you don't discipline yourself in the basic matters that concern you, then someone else will. That's tyranny. That's the servile state.

But lovemaking can be brutalized. There are many women now, and certainly there were women in the Victorian age, who never came. Men just hop on and off. That's not lovemaking. They never get reunion. They never become hermaphroditic for those three magical moments.

Question: Or seconds.

Lytle: Yes, seconds. (Much laughter.) Of course, I didn't mean to use the word magical because magic is forcing nature beyond her possibilities.

What I mean is that an act of concupiscence—it's not always the act of love—involves power which in some instances becomes brutal. And you sometimes have sadomasochism. Tennessee Williams had a very interesting incident in one of his stories. You know these places where you go for steam baths, and then you swim. Williams gets one of these very well. As you enter, it smells like dead flesh, and if you have ever been in one, you know it does. And he has this masochist, this little white man, and a big Negro was massaging him and then began to beat him, and then the white man got a hard-on and came on the table. Finally these two are driven out of the place and they go to the shantytown and things turn into real cannibalism. [The Negro] beat him to death and then ate him. What was wrong with the story is that across the way Williams had a Negro church singing spirituals. Now, that's sentimental. But he

had the basic sense, and he started right with the smell of dead flesh. Williams is not a good fiction writer, but that story is—not moving, but very illuminating. And of course drinking is the final thing, the social thing. *In vino veritas*. Drinking allows you to be true to one another.

Question: Discipline of the mind, then of the body, and then discipline within a social setting so as to live in order in a community. These are pretty lofty goals for both teacher and student.

Lytle: Of course, every man learns in his own way. And teaching is a craft.

At Sewanee students used to have to wear a coat and tie to class. They would come in barefooted, but they'd wear a coat and tie. When the weather got warm, they'd try to get away with taking off the coat and I'd say, "Now gentlemen, literature is greater than either the student or the professor, and you can only meet it formally. Put your coats on." But, again, every man learns in his own way.

But anyway, I don't see how you can teach anything you don't like. If you love it, the students will love it. I've found that to be the case. And if you love it, you've got to find a way to transmit it.

I don't understand, for example, these people who write a biography of a person they don't like. It seems a silly thing to do, something done by a bad-natured person who wants to get back at a person who is dead because he didn't like him.

Question: The modern university has gotten away from some of the things you're talking about. Instead of a university, where men and women achieve a level of communion and get the chance to plug in, so to speak, to the tradition of men who came before them, it's become a multiversity. Everyone's doing his own thing. Is this an acceptable situation?

Lytle: It's not. That's because society has disintegrated. When you have a community, everybody moves based on certain beliefs, divine and natural. The family is the best description of that. You cannot have thousands of people in school, as in the large state universities today—thirty and forty thousand. It's just too many. Now that doesn't mean you can't get an education there. If you're lucky, there will be certain teachers there who can teach and who love their subjects. But it's this Educationist business, with a capital *E*, which teaches methods and no subject, that's destroying education in this country. Disciplines require their own methods. Certainly you're not going to use the same methods in teaching French that you use in teaching chemistry. That's just confusion.

Question: Speaking of confusion: you often write of the relationship between confusion and order both in the individual and in society. And often you trace confusion to a confusion of tongues, a confusion in the use of language.

Lytle: Well, yes. Just look at any newspaper, or take one word:

*temperance*, for example. *Temperance* means that when you approach the objects of the world that are tempting, be temperate about them. That is, don't go whole hog; don't get drunk every day, just take a drink. But the moment you say you can't do something at all, when you replace temperance with prohibition . . . you see, that violates the language. And you can see the tremendous power of the crying world that has grown out of prohibition.

That's just one example, and an obvious one. You see, the word was the creative act of God. It has to do with life and a confusion of words is death. Now, of course, we all die. And whether you actually die alone, or in genocide, with a hundred million people, you always die alone. That's why when we talk about the atom bomb or nuclear explosion it doesn't matter about the individual, each individual, unless it hurts too bad. What we're really concerned with is the death of society. And the word is the discipliner and orderer of society. We cannot have communion if we do not know the meaning of language.

Question: So the confusion of language is just as destructive as any possible holocaust. And perhaps this is why you have dedicated yourself so painstakingly to fiction though much of your training was in history?

Lytle: Fiction is the best way to make present and understandable history. For the simple reason that you have to recreate people acting in their predicament. When I came along, historians could not write. They thought of themselves as scientists, and scientists are illiterate and don't write. My dear friend Frank Owsley wrote three basic books: *State Rights in the Confederacy*, *King Cotton Diplomacy*, and *Plain Folk of the Old South*. When I taught Civil War at Southwestern, I used the first book, and I read a paragraph that didn't make any sense to me at all. I presented it to him, the author, and he didn't know what it meant either!

I remember that Ambassador Dodd, who was ambassador to Germany under Hitler and was head of the history department at the University of Chicago, wrote a book on Jefferson Davis. He was held suspect because it was a decent book; you could read it. The words meant what they said, more or less. He was held suspect by his fellow historians. History, you can know it best—if you have a good writer—through fiction. The fiction writer doesn't have an ax to grind, to begin with. If he's good he will make people act in their predicament, and he will resolve it in some way before it's over. Of course this is a prejudiced view, if I may say so.

Question: This blending of history and fiction—fiction as history, you might call it—has certainly been a hallmark of your fiction and that of other Southern writers.

Lytle: What you have now, I think, is this: for the past fifty years literature has been dominated by Southerners. There's no doubt about it. But most of the publishing is in the Northeast, where a provincial



kind of sentimentality seems to dominate. And publishing is on the stock exchange up there, so when Post Toasties buys a great publishing house, they may know about Post Toasties, but what do they know about reading literature and publishing? It comes down to materialism, absolutely. It's getting to be that university presses and small presses in the South and elsewhere are the only hopes. There's great confusion as to the status of letters now because all the older people who had maintained it are dying off. The only one in the East now is Malcolm Cowley, who seems to live forever.

Question: Aside from this understanding of fiction as history, why have Southerners so dominated literature? What was special about the South?

Lytle: Allen Tate made the point. He compared the South to the 16th century. The defeated South, after the First World War, had come up against materialism through industrialism. So you had the two opposites come together, and the friction caused certain people to become aware of their inheritance, historic and otherwise, just as the Renaissance—which was a squandering of the inheritance of the high days of Christendom—met feudalism to produce the great Elizabethan plays. That's what Allen Tate said, and it makes great good sense.

And add this: the South was defeated. There was still at that time some sense of this defeat. People had eaten their bread in sorrow. That was a very important characteristic of the South, I think, whereas the Yankees have gone from one sweet titty to another. But don't forget this. People did and still do eat their bread in sorrow. That bread sometimes is a metaphysical bread. Those people in the Northeast have lost their sense of triumph. They're all screwed up. They don't know what they're doing.

Question: Based on what you've said about publishing and about society in general do you ever wonder that your own work has gained such a high status?

Lytle: An artist concentrates. Your whole attention is on your work, making it show itself. Anything that comes in, such as how to pay the mortgage on the farm, will it get me a reputation, will it get me a good lay, as some people used to say—anything that intrudes will spoil what you're doing. I would say that I've never let that intrude. I discovered that you just try to do the work. You don't know whether anybody's going to read the work or not. It's like being what the priest once was: totally committed. You take the long risk of faith, the long risk of not being recognized. I've been through that period. It didn't matter to me because I'm not ambitious in that way. I want to see the subject expose itself under the proper control of distance. That is the craft of fiction. And as I said, if we can become craftsmen again we can restore the sense of the divine.

## Andrew Lytle at DeKalb College, a Return Engagement

On May 23, 1985, Andrew Lytle and Peter Taylor were to have met on the campus of DeKalb College to discuss Southern literature. The occasion was to have been a reprise of earlier separate appearances at DeKalb's 1981-82 North Campus Symposium, *The Changing South*. Unfortunately, this anticipated conversation between Mr. Lytle and Mr. Taylor did not occur because at the last moment Mr. Taylor found it impossible to attend. Instead, the following interview with Mr. Lytle was conducted by Mr. Carl Griffin, Chairman of the North Campus Humanities Division, before an audience of DeKalb students, faculty, and local visitors.

*Carl H. Griffin*

**Carl Griffin:** It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you here tonight. I think one of the first things you are going to notice is that I am obviously not Peter Taylor. Unfortunately, Mr. Taylor is ill and cannot be with us, and I am substituting for him, poor substitute that I am. But I want to tell you that this gentleman on my left is Mr. Andrew Lytle in person, and if anyone is ever going to talk about Southern literature, this is the man to have. I call him the fountainhead of Southern literature, if you don't mind that metaphor, Mr. Lytle, because not only have you been involved in the Southern literature movement since its very beginning, having been associated with the Fugitives and the Agrarians in the 1920's and 1930's, but you have sustained your reputation as a novelist of the first rank with the publication in 1957 of *The Velvet Horn*, which is one of the finest novels of the twentieth century. In addition to your novels, you have been a biographer; your biography of *Nathan Bedford Forrest and His Critter Company* is famous. You are a renowned critic, one of the founders of the New Criticism. And, of course, you are revered as one of the editors of the *Sewanee Review*, the oldest literary quarterly in this country. As a teacher you have been inspiring to many students, some of whom have become famous in their own time, and I think largely due to your influence—people like Madison Jones, Jesse Hill Ford, Harry Crews, James Dickey, and Smith Kirkpatrick, to name just a few. Mr. Lytle, we are honored to have you here with us this evening. Again, I say that if one thinks of Southern literature, the second thought is of Andrew Lytle.

Since Mr. Taylor is not with us, I think that we can perhaps begin our discussions with him, Mr. Lytle. Isn't that the way things operate these days?

**Andrew Lytle:** It's well that Peter's not here, for we can talk about him a little, which we couldn't do if he were here. Of course, I think he is one of the two or three best fiction writers, story writers. He can't write a novel. He wants to, but his form doesn't allow that. But he's so charming, he's witty. He does what Henry James does not do, which is

that he presents to the reader the whole carnal nature of man: his circumstances, his difficulties, and also his delights. Nobody ever touches in James, if you will notice. But with Peter all of the five senses are employed, from sight to hearing, to taste and smell, and touch, which is a carnal sense. Sight, of course, is the sovereign sense. Shut your eyes, if you don't believe it's so. It's through the eyes that the form, which is insubstantial in the artist's head, reaches out and selects from the substantial world. You see, the artist makes the selection that fits the form; he brings together his inward form with the selected substance to create the fictive artifact. And Peter performs this creative act better than almost anybody I know.

Remember, too, that James wrote as an American in Europe. In Peter Taylor's work, and in most Southern writers' work, you will find that he deals with the conditions at home. In other words, we Southerners have all eaten our bread in sorrow. That is what finally determines the nature and definition of what has happened to a culture. Peter does that. There's nobody else who can do it as well. And he reaches all kinds of ranges of depravity, as well as other experiences, but he does it in the simplest kind of way.

I knew something about this boy before he or I had come into the world. He was a descendant of the War of Roses in Tennessee. Peter's great-grandfather and Peter's grandfather and Peter's great-uncle all ran for governor of the state of Tennessee at one time. Well, Mrs. Taylor took to her bed, and she let it be known that she would be in that bed alone. So the great-grandfather withdrew, and that just left the two brothers. This was during the time after the worst of Reconstruction, when you had what was called the return of the Bourbons. There was plenty of bourbon around, but that was not quite what they meant at that time.

So the brothers went through the countryside debating each other, though there were no issues, no issues at all. Peter's grandfather took his fiddle and bow along with him, and he rode through the country on a white horse with his retainer behind him. He and his brother slept in the bed together, and one morning he got up and stole his brother's speech and gave it. As he passed through our area on his white horse, my aunt met him with her servant and a silver bucket of champagne. I imagine it's criminal today to speak of servants, but, nevertheless, they did exist at one time. And my aunt took Peter's grandfather through the countryside. So I had this knowledge of Peter in my mind, and I sought him out when he was at Vanderbilt, when he was just a boy, and there I first knew him and we became friends. He later followed John Ransom to Kenyon when Vanderbilt's old Chancellor Kirkland said, "I don't want to turn out poets and farmers; I want to turn out bankers and lawyers."

Unfortunately, that white horse came through the country at a time when the fish were biting. My uncle-in-law was a great fisherman. My aunt had a carload of hogs to be sold, and he didn't want to go sell them, but she was a forthright woman, so he sold those hogs and put the money in the bank, but he kept a little out. To solace himself he drank a gallon of whiskey, and then he bought another gallon and drank that. That went along for a week or ten days, and then he began to think about home and how he was missed and how his wife did not like the smell of whiskey on his breath, so he got him a gallon of buttermilk to disguise it. And the buttermilk killed him and pickled him. They brought him home. Someone said, "You can't bury a warm man. He's just as warm. You can touch his cheeks and tell." So the rumor has gone about in that country that he was buried alive.

I bring this up by way of saying that particularly in the South, and certainly in the European tradition, what we are interested in is the behavior of human beings. Now we've got the *televisione*, and we don't talk to or about one another as we once did. But it's the family with its connections, that is, the kin and connections, that comprise the basis for Southern society. Once when you met a stranger you said, "Where're you from?" meaning, "If you tell me where you're from, I'm bound to have some kin there, and I'll know who you really are." Now you say, "What do you do?" Today you are reduced to your economic status in society.

Mr. Griffin: Since we're on the subject of other writers, I know you have written on William Faulkner, and I know you have read his works very carefully. Do you still hold him in as high esteem as you once did, as the greatest Southern writer?

Mr. Lytle: I think he is the greatest American writer.

Mr. Griffin: Do you think his not having an active role in the Agrarian or the Fugitive Movement is an interesting point? Is there any reason why he was not included?

Mr. Lytle: Well, he had not done his major writing then. That's one thing.

Another thing, Faulkner and Hemingway both wanted to be the only one. That's the defect of their carnal natures, not of their writing, you see. And he was, I think, a little jealous of other writers. I remember a sculptor who admired him tremendously went down there and knocked on the door and said he was from Nashville, and Faulkner slammed the door in his face. He pretended to be a farmer, but he only had a back lot with a horse in it. But that was the man. As a writer, I think he's the best.

Mr. Griffin: Speaking of the Agrarian and Fugitive movements, I think one of the most productive acts of those groups was to correct many of the historical misunderstandings about the South. And you, particular-

ly, in your essay "The Hind Tit" in *I'll Take My Stand*, show that the basis of Southern society was not the plantation system but the small farmer. I know that you have said on several occasions that Frank Owsley was an important influence on you, particularly in developing your sense of history. Will you tell us a little bit about that particular Agrarian.

Mr. Lytle: Frank Owsley was the greatest Southern historian. The liberals are trying to destroy his reputation, but they can't do the work he did, don't you see, so they can't destroy him. He has written three basic books, *State Rights in the Confederacy* and *King Cotton Diplomacy* and *Plain Folk of the Old South*. What he did no one else has done. He went to the census records. Owsley destroyed the myth that you had only great plantations, slaves, and poor whites. He showed the greatest diversity of big farmers, small-plot farmers, planters. He found men with two thousand acres and no slaves, and other men with slaves and no land. And this was in the Black Belt, around Montgomery and that area.

He also showed that States' rights had a great deal to do with destroying the Confederacy itself. In the first place, he didn't say it but I say it, States don't have rights: they have powers; citizens have rights. When you speak of States' rights, you put yourself in a servile position. It's just like the divine right of kings. There's no such thing as the divine right of kings. Rather, you had a Godwealth with a king or a prince who was God's secular overseer, and a bishop or a priest as the spiritual overseer. But they were not divine anymore than anyone else is divine. So that caused the great civil war in England, and it also allowed Henry VIII to almost destroy England in the sixteenth century.

So these are the things that you get from reading Frank Owsley. For his *King Cotton Diplomacy* he went to Europe, and in France he found the telegrams that Napoleon III sent to Gladstone saying, "Let's go in on the side of the South." These documents were thought to exist, but Owsley actually found them. His idea about King Cotton Diplomacy was that it had had a lot to do with the defeat of the Confederacy. The English economists had convinced the Southern planters—the planters, you understand, not the plain farmers who survived the War—that England's economy depended upon Southern cotton. The planters were intelligent men with good educations who had taken Latin and studied about Rome and thought in those terms. In their innocence, the planters believed they could use cotton to pressure England into the war. Unfortunately for them, there were two very large crops, in 1859 and 1860, and a surplus was created, which the English took full advantage of for the first two years of the war. Although only thirteen thousand bales of the 1861 crop went down to New Orleans for sale from the interior of the South, England had already filled her warehouses with cotton from the fifty-nine and sixty surpluses and would not run dangerously low until late 1862. So while the South waited for the British to come to their aid,

England, which expected the South to win anyway, was getting rich by furnishing both sides with supplies and munitions in the first two years of the war. When Lee's troops went into Chambersburg in an invasion of Pennsylvania, his men all had shiny imported Enfield rifles, although their feet were bare. Only after the first two years of the war did the North begin to develop its own industry. You see, industrialism had not at that time really become the thing it later became in the North, so that it's an anachronism to say that the South was defeated by Northern industrial might. It was England that furnished *both sides* in the crucial years of the war.

In *The Plain Folk of the Old South*, Owsley went to the wills, census records, the deeds, and marriage records, and all those things, and was able to reconstruct the social milieu of the life these people lived, which was the family life. The unit of Southern society was the family. And your connections, the people you married into, and the kin who are the components of that society. And he has the records there to support him, because he went to the records. And that's why the liberals who are servile in mind want to do away with him, because nobody could do the work he did. If you really want to know the conditions, in those three books they are presented.

I must lament that most modern historians got the idea that they were scientists. Now you can't deal with people and deal with them scientifically. People cannot be reduced to that. So that meant that they were not only faulty historians but bad writers, too. Ambassador Dodd, who, as you know, was head of the history department at the University of Chicago for years, wrote a moving narrative on Jefferson Davis. And so fortunately good history can still be written when historians understand that words mean what they say, and the combinations and modifiers form some kind of a truth, so you'd better be very careful what you do with words.

Mr. Griffin: If we could go back a decade before the Agrarians to the Fugitives, Laura Riding comes to mind because she was the only woman in the group.

Mr. Lytle: Just to mind? I only saw the lady once. You must remember, these were God-fearing men, most of them Puritans. No, they were not all Puritans—but Donald Davidson was—but they were Methodists anyway. They got together as was done at Oxford when John Ransom was there as a Rhodes Scholar, and I think that he brought the custom back to Nashville. The Fugitives were a wonderful community of bankers and lawyers and merchants and professors and students who got together to write verse and read it to one another and criticize it. Listen, they were hard on one another. They would almost come to blows. But they meant every word of it.

As for Laura Riding Gottschalk, she left Mr. Gottschalk in Louisville

forever, and she sent a few poems in to the Fugitives, and they printed them in *The Fugitive*, which cost only a quarter then. I saw her there at the meetings. I was just an innocent student then. She had the most charming voice. She had this little tongue that went out like a serpent's. And she picked those boys up, even Donald Davidson, who was a Puritan if there ever was one, and I saw that. And, so the story goes, she said some intimate words to John Crowe Ransom, and he told her that he was perfectly satisfied with his domestic arrangements. And she went on from there and that's history. But I don't think her verses were readable; frankly, she just took everyone in, in my opinion.

Mr. Griffin: Your associations with people like John Crowe Ransom and Allen Tate began in the beginning of your career and continued until their deaths. Would you evaluate both of those men in the sense of their contributions to the Republic of Letters?

Mr. Lytle: Of course, John Ransom taught us all, so I suppose you would have to put him first. Allen Tate was one of the most learned men and one of the best poets, although his poetry is a little private, that I know. We were all companions, and we had seven years of social life together as well as work. And that was purely because we were all the same kind of people, from Tennessee and Kentucky, all more or less interrelated. We knew the histories of each other's families. For example, and I wouldn't have dared said this to John during his lifetime, but the Ransoms were divided into two parts, the priests and intellectuals and the hard-bitten business men. One of them was known to bite a tobacco worm in two parts for a quarter, but that was not John Ransom's people. His father was a leading elder in the Methodist Church and a very learned man, and of course John was very learned in all the languages. He told me that when he wrote *God Without Thunder*, to show you how the Methodist school has declined in its theology, there were only three people taking Hebrew at Vanderbilt. He already knew Latin and Greek, but he wished to study Hebrew. Finally, after a few months, he was the only one still attending. Now there's the great decline in education, you see. For instance, at Sewanee, around where I live, Greek was on the entrance exam for theology students. And since the New Testament is written in Greek, you've got to know Greek to be a priest, I should think. But now it has been deliberately removed by the people who are trying to turn priests into social workers. That's what happened there. I think it's a desperately drastic thing, but it's been done.

Now Allen . . . we were really great friends for thirty-five years. Let me say, by the way, that in the beginning the only community that writers had was in Greenwich Village. Then Greenwich Village was a village; it was cheap; there it was, surrounded by this great big city; but you lived in a village. You knew people. The writers got together, they talked, they drank together, and it was not what it is now. I remember at

one time the Tates lived in what we called the *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. I don't know whether you have seen that movie or not, but it is set in a madman's mind.

The Tates' apartment was on Hudson Street, and it was an old Revolutionary inn, and Hudson Street went around it. It had been the headquarters of the Hudson Dusters, who were the gangsters in prior days who practiced burglary, white slavery, whoredom, and all those things before you got the big criminal burglary brought about by prohibition. Well, the Tates lived there, and I came down from Yale to visit them, and they put me in Della Day's room. Della, sister of Dorothy Day, had gone to Long Island. I had a cold, and I was about to go to bed, but heard a knock on the door, and this lovely girl came and said, "Are you living with Della Day?" I said, "No, I don't have that honor." She wanted to borrow her music box. I said, "Lady, I don't know you. I've just been put here by friends of Miss Day's."

But as it ended up, we went downstairs for the music box. The door opened and this Russian greasy smell of smoke and food came out, and there were two women standing there, one was the sister of that woman who worked on birth control, Sanger, and the other one looked like a French Revolutionist. She was a tall woman, hair all over her face, and they stood there debating whether I could go in or not. I didn't want to go in at all. But Margaret Sanger's sister prevailed, and I was allowed in. All these people were around, the flotsam and jetsam of the criminal world. They talked about beating up and being beaten up by Irish policemen. There was a woman from the Isle of Man there who looked at me and said, "This man put his hands on me and said, 'I would like to rape you.' And I said to him, 'Why do you not rape the Virgin Mary? You would get more satisfaction.' And with that, he hit me."

It was that kind of conversation that went on all evening. They would pour me a drink and drink it up before serving it to me. And then they began to talk about a man named Harry. And, by the way, there was a gangster there with a gold tooth, and that made him pretty human, I thought. Well, Harry was not there and they were wondering where he was. I got a little uneasy, because he was the friend of the girl who had got me to come down with her for the Victrola, so I stood up to go, saying, "I'm sorry, I've got a cold, I've got to go." But they wouldn't let me withdraw. Then someone entered with Harry. They had found him, his eyes blackened and his body slackly unconscious. Margaret Sanger's sister began to pick up beer bottles, pass them around the room, and throw them, creating some mild havoc. Finally she ended up on the floor in the arms of Harry, knocked out or passed out, I never knew which. And while they were all commiserating with her, I picked up the music box and quietly and modestly withdrew to my room and locked myself in.



Now that was the place we left to go through the battlefields of Virginia, when Tate was still working on his Jefferson Davis book. We bought a battered Ford for fifty dollars, calling it "The Wreck of the Old '97," and he and his wife Caroline Gordon, a very fine writer and coming into her own then, and their little girl Nancy, age three, and Katherine Anne Porter, all started out together. We dropped Katherine Anne off in Pennsylvania somewhere. And we went through the battlefields.

Now there were no through highways. You could just go along on country roads and stop by the side of the road and pick turnip greens and cook them and make a little corn bread, and the farmers were kind to us and would give us water. We toured all the battlefields. There were no Holiday Inns or anything like that, but in Richmond there was a public camp. And, to show you the effects of the Civil War, they just had a general wash house. The nightwatchman was the grand-nephew of General Bankhead Magruder. The manager of the camp was the grand-nephew of A. P. Hill, the man that Lee and Jackson both called in their dying breaths. Now that shows you the rise and fall of the Confederate government, right there. And when we went through Harper's Ferry, Red Warren met us there, going to Kentucky. We stopped in Richmond and washed and put on decent clothes and visited Allen's friends there.

I left them in Huntsville and went into Mississippi and that part of the world, doing research on Forrest. The world was a simple world then. When we stopped to eat, if it was 35¢ we would stop; if it was 45¢, we would go on. This was during the Depression. It seems meaningless today, but that's the way it was.

All of us came out of a common ground of inheritance, the same way of life, some of us connected or kin. And there were other things too. It was hard to make a living then. Poets couldn't make a living at all. They might get their poetry published, but they also had to write a biography or a novel, you see. Allen wrote reviews for *The New Republic* and *Nation* and got about thirty-five dollars a piece. Well, that would take care of cigarettes for a month.

Allen's wife, Caroline Gordon, came from a large group of landowners in Kentucky: they had 30,000 acres there before the Civil War. Their different houses were named Meriville and Merry Mont (which they called "Grandmother's House"). Meriville was the basic house, where they had before the War an orchestra of slaves, and the family played and danced in and out of the dining room. You had the Meriwethers who were sort of peasantlike farmers, although they were the masters: you had the silver-tongued Fergusons, who married the women and got their inheritance without doing anything. I could never figure out how the Barkers fitted in, although they figured in somewhere.

Miss Carrie, Caroline's mother, who was from this background of abun-

dance, once visited Allen and Caroline in Greenwich Village. She came in and said, "I've just gotten in off the train, and I haven't had any breakfast." She found there was no food in the house. Now here was a country woman who had never seen any lack of food in her life, nor had anyone around her. So she went out and bought a lot of food for them, but then took her grandchild Nancy and went back to Kentucky with her. That's the way it was then.

One doesn't go to Greenwich Village now, apparently. All kinds of things take place there. One thing is dope, and such as that. That's the difference from what I saw there in my time, the early thirties, the late twenties. It was the greatest boon to the arts when the universities began to invite writers to the campus. It made a community, a civilized society of knowledge and learning and literature. That's what makes a community of the arts. Before then it was pretty hard.

In speaking of Allen Tate and John Ransom, you have to talk about them in terms of their work. The artist's work defines him. In spite of the Industrial Revolution and "progress," which demean labor. Today's workers do the same thing over and over again, so they can take a vacation and go back and do it all over again. That's what the Industrial Revolution has brought on. People in the old days enjoyed their work and they enjoyed talking about their kin.

That was the most interesting thing in the world, family connections. I had a cousin, Mary Lytle, a great big fat woman. When she died out at Grandma's, they brought her to town seven miles to bury her. It was a hot July day, and the spring wagon she was on broke a wheel. They couldn't get it fixed, and the sun kept beaming down, and she swelled and broke the coffin. She wanted out. Well, that's the kind of thing a family could talk about.

Mr. Griffin: Mr. Lytle, speaking of the association between the artist and the university, you, of course, are well known for your founding of the creative writing program at the University of Florida in Gainesville and the fine writers you have influenced and shaped. I recall also that when many of your students, myself included, came to you and then went back to their regular academic classes, their professors were astonished by some of the things they knew about literature. Would you tell us a little about creative writing programs? How do you value them?

Mr. Lytle: Well, I'll tell you, I think creative writing is the best way to teach literature. You show how it was put together: that's the basic way to teach writing. If you take apart the structure of writing and put it together again, then you know how to read. That's the only possible way to teach literature, to teach people how to read it. I don't mean the surface action either. I mean its ultimate contingencies, its ultimate variety of meanings. I was lucky in Florida; I had the best students there. They were the best in both the academic world and in the writing world.

It was a lot of fun.

I misused the word "creative writing" for a long time. I think God creates and man imitates. No man can "create." What he does is form his view of the world by putting together what has already been made into a new form and into dramatic circumstances which are fresh and new. What is divine in man is this very thing. God was a creator. He made man, mankind, using the generic term. Every artist puts into his work his essential being, not his personality, but his essential being. God, in that way, put Himself into man. That's why the most demanding thing that man cannot do without is his craftsmanship. Whether it's teaching or making a boot or making a silver chalice, that's what man is made to do, and that's what he gets the greatest satisfaction from. That's what the Industrial Revolution denied by making us wait on the machine rather than letting the machine, such as the hoe or the plow, wait on us. When you wait on a machine, you deny the divine order of the universe. I hope that's not too wide a sweep.

Mr. Griffin: Mr. Lytle, of all the roles that you have played in the "Southern Republic of Letters," your greatest contribution is your own work. It's wonderful to know that some of your works have been reprinted in recent years and are now available to the public. *Nathan Bedford Forrest and His Critter Company* has been reprinted by the Green Key Press in Florida. And both *The Velvet Horn* and *Alchemy and Other Stories* are presently available in reprints. How do you feel about this new readership?

Mr. Lytle: Well, I'll tell you, it's very moving to find a whole new body of readers, another generation or two. You see, I've been out of print for so long. I've lived almost forever. When I used to be a young actor, I wondered why old men lived so long. I know exactly why now. So I'm glad to have all this come out, and I can see people reading it and enjoying it.

Mr. Griffin: Do you feel that some of your work and perhaps some of the key ideas of the Fugitives and Agrarians may have a more responsive audience now than in the thirties?

Mr. Lytle: We were not prophets. We had our backs to the wall. We just wanted to make a statement. What made it seem relevant was the 1929 stock-market crash. Before that, we were just trying to make a statement. And then, you still had a chance between the property-owning society and the almighty industrialists. There were enough people on family-size farms and in family businesses and in small communities with horse and buggy. You didn't move about much: you didn't move over about seven miles. You didn't drop in for a chat; you stayed all day, and sometimes all night, when you went somewhere. The railroads didn't break up the community. You got in the buggy and went to the depot and got on a train and went to another community. But cars and good roads did have a great deal to do with dispersing people. They used to

want to just play on the banjo on WSN in Nashville; now they want to do other things, go other places.

Mr. Griffin: Although you may not agree, others have said that the Agrarians were better prophets than they knew. Would you care, tonight, to follow those ideas into the future? What do you see in terms of the moral and the economic future of our society?

Mr. Lytle: In the first place, there is no future. The future is the present tense, suspended. Because we all live in the present tense, finally. The past, you see, is the present tense, but it doesn't exist in our immediate present, but it existed in the past immediate present. Certainly, a writer has to look at it that way. The moment someone says, "I remember," the jig is up. What you remember is something that is dead and past. The hard thing in making a transition is to make the past, as if it were in the present tense, act upon the immediate present tense. And that takes a long time to learn, how to make that kind of transition.

So I'm not addressing your question because I can't answer it. I just don't know. I feel there's going to be a catastrophe, maybe a disease. You've got something now they call AIDS. They don't know what it is just as they didn't know what the Bubonic Plague was when it destroyed from a fourth to a third of the population of Europe. I think it is just as likely to be that as it is to be one of the neutron bombs. I fear a catastrophe. If you don't own anything—we are all on the dole now—if you don't have a piece of the natural world, which is not yours but which you serve, if you don't see all the changes of the seasons to enrich your life, if the family exists no longer, with its kin and connections, that's the end of society and it's over. We know that the man on horseback is no solution. I was no prophet in the first place. I know that we could never have believed that it would be as bad as it is now. The only reason people didn't take us seriously then was that they couldn't imagine the world they lived in disappearing. But, of course, it has.

Mr. Griffin: I do have some other questions, but I'm sure there are questions from our audience. I want to give the audience a chance to address their questions to you. So at this time, if you have a question, please address it to Mr. Lytle.

Mr. Lytle: Don't make it too hard.

Spencer Ragsdale: Referring to something you said earlier, I've always heard about Southern history that the South lost the War because of a lack of industrial power, but you said earlier that the industrialization of the North was not so developed and was not a real factor. If such were the case and the South suffered more from the English investor than from the guns and power of the North, why did the South lose the War? Lack of leadership? States' rights?

Mr. Lytle: One idea which I have already mentioned is States' rights. But you can't reduce it to one cause, ever. There were also certain in-

dividuals like Bragg. So many of the leaders were neurotic. Stonewall Jackson sucked lemons because he thought his left leg would shrink. He should have passed those lemons around, I'll tell you! General Ewing had married a widow, but instead of introducing her as Mrs. Ewing, he introduced her as Mrs. Campbell. There were things like that going on. They were eccentrics, a lot of them, because they wanted to be.

Now you take Caroline Gordon's account of her own family; it was the basis for *The Women on the Porch* (1944). I don't know whether you've read that, but it's an awfully good book. Well, her family were perfectly normal people, moral people. But one of them thought she was a pea and would fall through a crack in the floor. However, in every other respect, she was all right.

This Southern eccentricity, even if it played a role in the loss of the War, certainly contributed to Southern storytelling. Another of Caroline Gordon's relatives, Dr. Meriwether, was late coming home to lunch one day because he had stopped to see "The Petrified Woman" in a traveling freak show. His pastor asked, "Dr. Meriwether, what do you see that's so fascinating in 'The Petrified Woman'?" He replied, "Well, I wanted to see a woman petrified all over, instead of only one spot."

People had a lot of fun, talking about one another like that. I had this great-uncle, Jack Lytle. Uncle Jack had a cleft palate. In his heart, he was a great lover, but he found it awful hard to say, "I luv ya," so he took to drink. There was nothing else left for him to do. His mother thought she would get him away from his companions, so she sent him to a church school, where they had to bury the liquor in the ground and sip it up through wheat straws—You can't do away with the bad; that's the whole fallacy of the modern world, that everything finally will be good.—So he wrote home, "Dear Mom: Quit sending so much advice, and send more money. There's barely enough to keep from stealing." Well, he came back home. Never could marry. His mother, who was a formidable woman, the matriarch of the family, sat in that back room—the chamber, they called it—and told you when you could take off your winter underwear and when you could go barefooted, and a lot of other things, too, when the men came in and listened to her. She said on one occasion, "If you see my son John, and he's sober, tell him he may drive me home tonight." Well, they found Uncle Jack in the Guggenheim saloon on the northwest corner of the square and delivered the message. He said, "You tell Ma her message came too late." I hope any message I give tonight won't be coming too late.

Mr. Griffin: Do we have some other questions?

Victor Kramer: I'd like to ask a question about your novel, *At the Moon's Inn*. I wonder why you chose to write that novel in the 1930's.

Mr. Lytle: Well, I can't tell you exactly why. I can tell you the specious reason. I was reading Pickett's *History of Alabama* [Albert J. Pickett.

*History of Alabama, and Incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi, from the Earliest Period, 1851.*] Do you know that book? It's an old book I was reading for some other information on another novel I had intended. I came on this statement: "... with DeSoto's men coming in here with fifty-ducat breast plates and going out in skins." And that undid me.

I hated that book before I got through with it. I had to do research on the Stone-Age Indians and on the sixteenth-century Spaniards. The thing that finally brought them together in common was the Indian formality and the very rigid formality of the Spaniards. That's the reason for the book. It's the only reason I know.

We must accept, finally, that the power of art is a mystery. You can't quite explain it. That's why critics who know something about a man's civil position, his religion, whatever he is in life, misread him as an artist. Because an artist's talent is a divine thing that enters through some kind of invisible corridor into the mind, we don't know where. The pagans knew it. The bard sat at the high table with the king. He had his own role. And so to try to interpret a work of art by a man's beliefs during his own lifetime is all wrong. Because the artist is even above himself. That may be romanticism, but that's my belief. That's the only reason I continued with the novel *At the Moon's Inn*. It nearly worked me to death. You have to stop sometime. You could do research forever on anything.

Mr. Griffin: You were telling us this afternoon why Atlanta is a crossroads, and the explanation goes beyond the white man. Would you reiterate that for us?

Mr. Lytle: Well, you've got this big airport here in Atlanta, and all this wide-spread area. In Decatur the Indian paths, north, south, east and west, met there because it was the end of the mountains. And the Indians traded there. And it's still, I understand, the place where you collect things to distribute elsewhere. Probably the animals did it originally. If you try to cross mountains which are full of logs you will understand this. A snake can hardly get through logs. Unfortunately, in an industrial society the cities dominate everything. If you will notice, in our present world the countryside is empty and things come from afar.

Ron Swofford: You mentioned Katherine Anne Porter earlier. What did she think about the Agrarians?

Mr. Lytle: Oh, she went along with us. The women were very loyal. Katherine Anne, and Caroline Gordon, and Harriet Chappell Owsley, who did as much research as Frank did. And "Chink" Nichol Lanier, my cousin who married Lyle Lanier, who is one of the three Agrarians still alive and who makes one of the best arguments in *I'll Take My Stand*. Oh, yes, Katherine Anne Porter understood and supported our position. She was one of the smartest women I ever knew. She was a fascinating person who has had the recent misfortune of an unsympathetic and

uninspired biographer. The woman depicted in that book is *not* the Katherine Anne Porter that I and her other friends knew.

Mr. Griffin: Probably that's living proof that one should not authorize a biography or a biographer.

Mr. Lytle: No, one shouldn't, but it's hard to get around because a writer can't get a contract unless it's "authorized." If one can just stay away from that word. What is the word in the high schools? It's "certified." That's the worst word in the English language. Your certification should be your students, what you have done to them, either good or bad. So much of modern education is an abstraction, a method without any subject, I think. But then I'm just in the university world by the back door, and very grateful to be there.

Mr. Griffin: Mr. Lytle, what do you think of contemporary Southern writers who have left the South to gravitate to large Northern centers like New York. Do they retain the attachment to their native region that Flannery O'Connor thought was so important?

Mr. Lytle: I taught Flannery. Did you know that? At Iowa.

I think everybody's got to leave home at some time, so as to get a proper perspective. And even Southern writers who become professional Southerners. When you come from the Midwest or from New England, you can become a New Yorker, though I still think this constitutes a kind of disloyalty. But you need to get away from home to get some positive view of it. I was lucky enough to be sent to Paris when I was eighteen. Mind you, I was well guarded from the pleasures that were possible then. And I was worked to death at Oxford. But then, Southerners would not recognize Southern writers or artists unless they were first recognized in the East. That was one of our plights. That's what Allen Tate complained so bitterly about. He said he didn't mind using an indoor toilet, but he didn't think you had to get down and worship it every time you used it.

As to the Southern writers who lost their sense of region, they were never good writers. I despise them. You have got to believe in what you are doing. You've got to believe in your characters as being true and real, and belonging to a place. A lot of those writers quit writing. They sort of fizzled out. Well, I won't name some. But you know them.

Mr. Griffin: Will you say a little about Flannery O'Connor from the perspective of having been her teacher?

Mr. Lytle: Well, Iowa was the place where everybody who is a respected writer has been. It was run by a man named Paul Engle, who wrote a volume of verse called *Corn*. He taught the poets and had somebody else to teach the fiction. I was there for two spring terms. I ran it the second spring term. I had twelve students, and Flannery was one of them. I was asked to read some of her work when I came because they knew I knew how to pronounce "chitlins." She was a lovely girl,

but scared the boys to death with her irony. She would put a man in bed with a woman, and I would say, "Now, Flannery, it's not done quite that way," and we talked a little bit about it, but she couldn't face up to it, so she put a hat on his head and made a comic figure of him.

We talked about the things you talk about when you are tutoring somebody. She was a lonely person. She kept to herself. I think she foresaw this lupus. It's a terrible word, "wolf," which ate her up, and it began to happen to her the year after she left Iowa, when she was with the Fitzgeralds. You know, Robert Fitzgerald translated *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Sally Fitzgerald, her biographer, had to tell her that she had lupus. Her mother kept saying that it was rheumatism. Flannery knew it wasn't. Her father had died of it.

I think her best thing is "Parker's Back," which she wrote on her deathbed. I don't know whether you all know that story or not, but then every one of them is good. The only thing, though, she never got quite close enough into the minds of her characters. She stopped just short of that. So it makes it difficult. If you've read "A Good Man is Hard to Find," at first you wonder why the grandmother speaks of a killer as one of her children. Well, the instant the grandmother's mind went blank, the Holy Ghost descended. That was Flannery's intention. But you've got to see what's in the mind before you can believe it. You can't just take it for granted that the reader will know. You can't just ask somebody to take your word for it. It must be rendered somehow in the story. It's not enough to say at the end of the story, "She smiled like a child" and "She crossed her legs like a child," in a state of innocence, because you have already felt she had made the ultimate betrayal of herself and discovered that she had also betrayed Christ. That's what I think, anyway.

Ron Swofford: Do you think cinema has a place in literature?

Mr. Lytle: No. It's another discipline. And I don't think the *televisione* does, either. Here's this magnificent instrument, a magical instrument, and all you get is some dull old life, over-emphasized. It's all about money. All these car salesmen, look at them. They never tell you what the initial cost is; you don't know whether you're saving anything or not. It's all money.

There's nothing that will ever quite take the place of actors on the stage with language that's moving, but we're heading fast toward general illiteracy. Nobody's going to be reading anything. But that's the dark side. I think some people are always going to read, anyhow some of them. But another thing you get in the movies and on television is the formula, which is a scientific thing, presumably. But remember, the basis for art is not formula but form, and form is something that is rich. It's just like Love and the difference between Love and lust.

Lust is like a mathematical line which is the shortest distance between



two points. After it's over, the object is discarded. But you court Love, encircle Love, and enrich it by your thoughts about it, and you're in and out before you come to the conclusion. That's what literature does, and any work of art. Michelangelo rescued the image from stone—of course, he put it there—and you have *David*. But you do not have that on the television or in the movies.

Now the silent movies were better than the speaking movies because the actors were trained in the theater. But I've watched directors take four lines over and over again for an hour-and-a-half. In the theater you get your positions on the stage and your cues, and the second week you try to do away with the cues, and the third week you'd better, by God, pull it together, or the curtain won't ring up. Now that's where actors come trained with a beginning, a middle, and an end. In the movies, the cutters make it. It's a machine that takes over; it's the camera, over and over and over and over again. And the cutters in the editing room. And they are not always equal to the occasion. The only good movie that I've seen recently was *Henry V*. You saw those arrows go over, and you knew that was the end of the French chivalry. You couldn't do that on the stage. Mind you, opinion is a vulgarity of taste. So you can take it or leave it.

Marvin Cole: Samuel Clemens used to be a writer of boys' books and, therefore, English teachers never studied him. You made the statement that Faulkner was the best writer we have. Would you compare Twain and Faulkner a bit?

Mr. Lytle: No, I tell you, I don't believe in comparisons in literature. You can't compare two people who are good. Each is good in his own way. If you'll forgive me, that's what I think. Comparative literature is done on such a low level that it doesn't matter. And the crucial thing is that if the writer, or the poet, is any good, he's good in his own right, and should be considered so, especially if he has done in his work what he intended to do.

Mr. Griffin: Any other questions? . . . Well, Mr. Lytle, on behalf of myself and the audience and DeKalb College, I want to thank you for being with us. And I think everyone understands even better after this evening why you are a founder, sustainer, and perpetuator of the Republic of Letters.

Mr. Lytle: Thank you. Thank you very much. Mighty big words.

## Andrew Lytle, Mentor

*Madison Jones*

A good many years ago I wrote an essay on Andrew Lytle which I began with a statement about things of value that I had learned from him. I concentrated on a single one and because I continue to think that this one among them all was most crucial for me as a fiction writer I want to start by repeating here a part of what I said.

I learned it (most of forty years ago) in those creative writing classes of his at the University of Florida. Though a hard lesson at first, it was a simple one. It was that fiction writing is work, and grueling work. Fiction writing was a craft, an exceptionally difficult craft, and like any other it had to be mastered. There was more besides involved, to be sure, but the rest was locked up inside the writer, and the only way it could emerge was through the writer's mastery of his craft. And so he taught me, taught us all, craft. Or, it might be more accurate to say, he taught us the scrupulous attention to it, since finally a writer can learn his business only in doing it.

Mr. Lytle told me this and showed it to me in my own work, those stories I submitted him. But he showed it to me in still another and in the circumstances even more convincing way. This was when I read his own fiction. For there, from first to last, was an exceptionally vivid example of a writer's practicing what he preached. (Or, as well, preaching what he practiced.) What was made clear enough to me then was, a little later, made still more emphatically clear upon publication of *The Velvet Horn*: that here was a writer whose unsparing attention to his craft had transformed it from merely that into art of a distinguished order. Here was an art that by precision of language and rendered detail, by alertness to form and to each new implication of image, not only used but used up its subject and drew the eye through the particular into the universal.

As Mr. Lytle's student I supposed that this consciousness of the necessity for scrupulous craftsmanship was something he had learned through the continuous practice of his art. Later, looking back more seriously at his first published work, I partly changed my mind. Then I came to believe that this consciousness was a thing he was either born with or else, more probably, had derived from the vanished society out of which he came—a consciousness based on the knowledge that we can transcend matter only by means of matter. This, in terms of art, implies craftsmanship, and it was something Mr. Lytle seemed to know very perfectly at least from the time of his first published work.

This was the great lesson that Mr. Lytle had to teach me, but there were others; and if I failed to learn them, or partly failed, the fault was mine. Among the rarest of his qualities, there for my example, was a serenity of confidence in the value of his writings. It had no part of arrogance or even conceit in it, nor was it of a kind to ignore or refuse unpleasing criticism. It was simply that he knew what had gone into the work—all he had labored to learn and all that he was. Hence, at rest in his self-knowledge, he had the capacity to see through and beyond the flux of opinion that sorely tries the faith of many an author. Time would bring the true illumination.

But Mr. Lytle's mentorship was not and is not confined to matters necessarily related to the art of writing. An artist at writing he certainly is, but in almost equal measure he is an artist at living. One senses it immediately upon entering his home—the courtesy, the easy grace, the hint of something like liberation from the sweaty world outside. It is as if things are valued there that other people ignore or have forgotten about, as if household objects that for most of us have mere utility have there a different and living significance. It is a charmed house, so endowed by an owner who understands the value and eloquence of things in themselves. Visitors—and how many of them there are!—must leave that house with the grateful reflection that one man at least remains who truly knows how to “be.” May he “be” for a long time to come, and live in consciousness of the friendship and gratitude that so many old students, and others, will continue to feel for him.

## Conversation with John Tyree Fain

The following conversation with John Tyree Fain occurred Sunday, August 17, 1986, at his home in Gainesville, Florida, four months before his death in December. This interview contains Dr. Fain's last public statements about the Fugitive-Agrarian movements and about his longtime friend Andrew Lytle.

A student of John Crowe Ransom's and Donald Davidson's at Vanderbilt University in the 1920's, Dr. Fain was a classmate of Andrew Lytle, Robert Penn Warren, and Merrill Moore. An authority on the Victorian Age and author of *Ruskin and the Economists*, Dr. Fain possessed an abiding interest in the Fugitives and Agrarians, reflected in his edition of Donald Davidson's *The Spyglass: Views and Reviews, 1924-1930*, and in his editing, with Thomas Daniel Young, of *The Literary Correspondence of Donald Davidson and Allen Tate*. While at the University of Florida as professor of English, Dr. Fain had an opportunity to renew his friendship with Andrew Lytle during those thirteen eventful years (1948-1961) when Mr. Lytle was in Gainesville establishing his creative writing program.

### Carl H. Griffin

Carl H. Griffin: John, you have probably known Andrew Lytle longer than anyone else in Gainesville. I believe your friendship with him goes all the way back to your collegiate years at Vanderbilt University.

John T. Fain: Yes. You see, we were both members of the Calumet Club, which was a group of professors and students interested in literary matters. We both thought he was going to be a playwright in those days. Andrew had written some one-act plays and would attend George Pierce Bakers' workshop at Yale upon his graduation from Vanderbilt. While in the New York area, he did some professional acting in the New York theaters. Andrew was in the class of 1925 at Vanderbilt. He would have graduated in 1924, but he had spent his first college year attending Oxford University and traveling in Europe. Andrew was from a well-to-do family. He could do almost anything he wanted to do. As you know, he's from Murfreesboro, thirty miles from Nashville.

Mr. Griffin: Tell us some more about the Calumet Club at Vanderbilt.

Dr. Fain: I always thought that the Calumet Club was a kind of continuation of what John Crowe Ransom experienced at Oxford. He belonged to one of their literary clubs. And graduate students were encouraged to come to Ransom's office and have tea in the afternoons, which was also another one of his British requirements.

Mr. Griffin: I remember you once said that the methodology that Mr. Lytle used in his class, almost the kind of tutorial approach, may have been derived from Ransom, who may have picked up that methodology at Oxford when he was a Rhodes Scholar. Would you comment a little more on that?

Dr. Fain: I've always thought that this was true. Of course, I have no evidence of it except my knowledge of how Ransom worked. I also spent two terms in Andrew Lytle's classes and noted the similarities.

**Mr. Griffin:** In what year? Do you recall?

**Dr. Fain:** Oh, about 1952 or '53, along about then. Andrew and I used to talk a lot about literary matters, and one night he said, "Well, Tyree, why don't you come to one of my classes? We talk about those things all the time." And I enjoyed it so much that I went every Thursday night. And, I think I told you, I used to sit with Frank Taylor,<sup>1</sup> who was one of Andrew's protégés and who later became a member of the department.

**Mr. Griffin:** I remember you told me that you would like to engender in your classes, and other professors should engender in their classes, the kind of enthusiasm and commitment that you saw in Lytle's classes.

**Dr. Fain:** Yes. There was total commitment. The kind that artists often get when they sit and paint together. My daughter took some art classes at the University, and she experienced the same sort of thing. I had one of Lytle's students in a seminar of mine. He was well acquainted with Andrew's methods, Andrew's utter frankness. Of course, no names were mentioned in his classes, but everyone finally knew what everybody else was doing, as you remember. Anyway, this student of mine said, "Let's see if we can't get some of this total rapport in our seminars, in your Victorian seminars." And we tried to. This student that I had asked to help me probably was a little too violent in his criticisms. One of the girls in the class started crying and interrupted the class, so I told my assistant, "Let's let up on this. I guess we can't do this sort of thing." But Andrew had utter honesty with his students.

**Mr. Griffin:** It was honesty, but it was always very tactfully handled, wasn't it? I mean, I never knew Mr. Lytle to hurt any of his students' feelings.

**Dr. Fain:** Oh, yes. That's true. And I probably could have chosen one of his less violent students to help me. Anyway, it didn't work on that occasion.

You and I were talking about another of my students who had decided not to get a creative writing degree. He decided to get a Ph.D. instead, and he had selected as his field the pre-Shakespearean dramas, the folk dramas. He was writing papers for Walter Herbert<sup>2</sup> who taught those courses. Walter was very pleased with his approach to the folk dramas. And my student came to me and said, "Should I tell him that that's what we do all the time in Mr. Lytle's classes?" And I said, "That's up to you." But I think he did tell Walter.

**Mr. Griffin:** Really, what Mr. Lytle was doing, to a great extent, was introducing the principles of the New Criticism, which could have been applicable in any class. Or do you think that is an accurate statement?

**Dr. Fain:** Well, yes. I guess that sort of thing had never been used on pre-Shakespearean drama. It was new. The emphasis on exposition. Actually, the so-called New Critics were really never understood properly. They didn't mean to leave out all the historical and psychological

aspects of literary interpretation. They just meant, "You've been overlooking the text itself. Let's emphasize something that has never been emphasized sufficiently." And if you read a work like Cleanth Brooks' *The Well-Wrought Urn*, it uses all kinds of criticism. Or if you read Warren's superb seventy-page introduction to "The Ancient Mariner," he uses all kinds of criticism too. But people tend to stereotype, you know. It's awfully hard when you know a person as thoroughly as I know Warren and can read between his lines. You really get an utterly different understanding of his work which contradicts the stereotype that certain critics made of the New Criticism. Tate mentioned somewhere that somebody told him that he learned how to criticize literature from Ransom, and Tate said, "Well, that surprises me. Mostly, the thing I learned from Ransom was philosophy." Actually, when Ransom went to Kenyon College, he taught a course in philosophy, which I didn't know about at the time. I don't suppose many people knew about it.

Mr. Griffin: Well, John, you and I both sat in on Mr. Lytle's classes. The methodology was very interesting. Stories were read which the students had submitted, and then Mr. Lytle would call for commentaries from different members of the class. And then he himself would offer commentary. The student would have his story returned, and he would rewrite the story on the basis of the comments that he had received. And, of course, Mr. Lytle would always have extensive private conversations with the writer about his work.

Dr. Fain: Oh, yes. His students discovered that he did a good deal of his own writing at five o'clock in the morning, and they started coming over to see him at five o'clock. Over to his house.

Mr. Griffin: So he was besieged by his students even at five o'clock in the morning. Well, let me ask you about this. You, of course, were a member of the English Department, and you were a very strong academic person within the Department. Creative writing was a rather new field then. I don't think he would mind our saying so — Aubrey Williams<sup>3</sup> always seemed to have his doubts about the role of creative writing in a . . .

Dr. Fain: In the graduate school, yes. He wanted it as an undergraduate discipline. I often argued with him about it. I said, "Aubrey, students really can't stay here long enough to gain experience unless you have a graduate program." And actually the University of Iowa had one at the time. This business of having creative writing was not really new. I can't remember the date right now, but T. S. Eliot was invited to come to Harvard. It was the first time he had come back to America, really. He spent a year at Harvard, teaching creative writing. Somewhere along 1931-32, along in there. So it was not unheard of.

Actually, the academic faculty at Florida looked askance at the creative

writing program initially. Andrew never asked for anything. He always thought you should be granted something. Maybe if Andrew had fought for raises in salary, maybe he would have had them. Andrew always thought that people should understand that those things should be given, not struggled for. I suppose he's right, but it doesn't always work that way.

Mr. Griffin: Well, do you think that the same situation exists today? What about the creative writing program that exists now at the University of Florida? Mr. Lytle is, of course, the progenitor of that program. But does creative writing now have more recognition than in the early days?

Dr. Fain: Yes, it does. They have a graduate faculty in the creative-writing group now. In the old days, Andrew *was* the creative-writing department. Smith Kirkpatrick came along as his protégé, and often Andrew would turn over his classes to Kirkpatrick and he would conduct them.

Mr. Griffin: I believe you told me that Mr. Lytle's title was that of "lecturer" when he was here.

Dr. Fain: He was never given any title except "Lecturer in English." I always thought it was an indignity. He should have been a full professor. But, after all, I was not in any position to do anything about it.

Mr. Griffin: But wasn't he later awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters degree in 1970 by the University of Florida, and didn't you make the presentation speech at that time?

Dr. Fain: Yes. It was our first literary symposium here. We had Ransom, Peter Taylor, Cleanth Brooks. Tate was supposed to come, but at the last minute said he couldn't. Tate and Andrew had a tragic disagreement after a lifelong friendship. It may have been connected with that. I don't know. Actually, this was the last public appearance of Ransom anywhere. It was not long before his death. Because I was a former student of Ransom's, they asked me to introduce him, which I did. The administration had given Ransom a room in the Reitz Union up on the fourth floor, actually engaged for important people who came. I had been up there to Ransom's room. Right before I was to introduce Ransom, he said he had left his notes in his room, and could I go up and get them; they were in his suitcase. But I couldn't find them. I was much more embarrassed than he was. He didn't much care. I told Cleanth Brooks about it later, and he said, "Well, Tyree, maybe he didn't have any."

Ransom, with whom Lytle studied also, was a very informal teacher. He didn't think it was strange that he was not prepared for class in what you would call a scholarly way. When I took a criticism course with him, one day he came in and read one of Hardy's novels. He may have stopped once to make a brief comment, but most of it was just reading. That was not typical, because sometimes he would knock the top of your head

off when the spirit moved him. It was all sort of spontaneous. We didn't think it was strange. These people were writing their books and making themselves famous, making Vanderbilt famous, too.

Mr. Griffin: I think one of Mr. Lytle's greatest qualities is his capacity for friendship. As Will Ormond<sup>8</sup> once said, "Andrew always makes the world seem a little better than it really is." You knew him in that way. And certainly as a companion he was marvelous.

Dr. Fain: He was also, and still is, one of the most successful and remarkable raconteurs I have ever heard.

Mr. Griffin: Again, his relationship with his students was extraordinarily informal and extraordinarily powerful. He seemed to regard them as more, certainly, than just students. They were protégés.

Dr. Fain: Yes, it was an intimate kind of relationship. Of course, I can't imagine an episode such as this really happening in Andrew's class, but I can imagine how he would have handled it: Tate went back to Vanderbilt to teach one time, and he made some remark to one of the students that was reactionary. And the student said, "Mr. Tate, you don't really believe all that crap, do you?" Tate didn't respond, but he went to the head of the department and wanted the student withdrawn from his class. I never heard of any of Andrew's students saying anything like that. I think he would have been much more genial.

Mr. Griffin: I can't imagine Mr. Lytle removing a student from his class.

Dr. Fain: It was sort of an intimate relationship and at the same time he was a father-figure to them. Of course, he was old, compared to them. One of the students in class one day said, "But, Mr. Lytle, I can't believe that you can remember any of these things that you are talking about" And he said, "Oh, son, I'm older than God."

Mr. Griffin: And yet one of the amazing things about him was his great appeal to young people. They always responded to him, and there was never anything of the "old fogey" about him at all. I remember hearing Mr. Lytle himself tell about riding up the mountain to Sewanee in a convertible, an open convertible, with one of his students.

Dr. Fain: And yet, he had his students' utter respect. In some cases, he was almost venerated.

Mr. Griffin: You, of course, knew him well during the thirteen years he was here at the University of Florida (1948-1961). He has always been described as the most consistent of the Agrarians, one who changed least in his views, certainly in comparison to someone like Robert Penn Warren. I know he didn't spend much time talking about those things, but do you feel that he remained fairly consistent in his views as they first appeared in 1930 in *I'll Take My Stand*?

Dr. Fain: Yes, more so than the others, I think. With the possible exception of Donald Davidson. And yet, you see, Andrew is a humorist, too. You can't always put your finger on what a humorist means and what



he doesn't mean. He used to talk about incest as a favorable institution, and he would shock people around here. You just didn't know how serious he was. Actually, he does have incest in *The Velvet Horn*, but that doesn't mean that he would advocate it.

Mr. Griffin: Do you remember the story that was told about him when he was teaching history at the University of the South, teaching American history? He never would get to the end of the course, because he didn't want to talk about the defeat of the South. He never quite got to 1865. Did you hear that story about him?

Dr. Fain: No, I don't believe so.

Mr. Griffin: He never got to the end of the War, because it was so difficult for him to admit the defeat of the South. Yet, it's interesting that he taught students from all sections of the country, and they always responded to him so favorably.

Dr. Fain: Some of his best students were sent to him, you know, by Ransom and Tate and Davidson. Partly because some of the schools didn't give master's degrees in creative writing and we did at Florida.

Mr. Griffin: Do you know the circumstances that brought him to the University of Florida?

Dr. Fain: No, I don't, but that's an interesting question.

Mr. Griffin: Wasn't Ransom here one summer?

Dr. Fain: Ransom was here the year before I came. I came in 1947, and I think Ransom was here in '45 or '46. Ransom might have recommended him to come here.<sup>9</sup>

Mr. Griffin: Well, the only criticism I ever heard of Mr. Lytle from a single student was the fact that he was trying to produce the artist rather than simply to get your work published. I think that was true, and I think that was commendable.

Dr. Fain: Yes, that was true, and that has been carried on all through the years by Smith Kirkpatrick, too. I neglected to mention when we were talking about Andrew's conduct of his class, that one of the chief practices of the class was to read great stories, for instance Lawrence's "The Rocking-Horse Winner" and others like that, and then they would all analyze that story.

Mr. Griffin: I remember one of Mr. Lytle's favorites was Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat." He found out that the story was being taught in freshman English and was appalled that only two days were devoted to the work. He said it would require at least two weeks of careful analysis. And I think he would take up about two weeks with it. He would go over every detail, and when you finished with the story you certainly knew it inside out.<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Fain: Andrew always said to his students, "I can't necessarily make you a good writer, but I can make you a good reader." This keen critical acumen made him a fine critic, and he was invited back to the Universi-

ty of the South in 1961 to resume the editorship of the *Sewanee Review*. He actually left Gainesville because Edna his wife had been operated on and lost a lung, and they felt that the Sewanee atmosphere in the mountain country would be better for them than Florida. After Edna died, I think Andrew would have come back to Gainesville if he had had sufficient inducement—salarywise as well as feeling that creative writing really counted with the University. He told me one time, as he showed me a letter that he got from Archie Robertson,<sup>8</sup> who at that time was head of the department, "You know, I really believe Archie wanted me to come back, but it's too late."

Mr. Griffin: But it would have been wonderful, had he come back. I think he loved Gainesville. His children grew up here in Gainesville; he spent a good bit of his married life here; he had many friends here.

Dr. Fain: Thirteen years is a long time. Well, after all, he wrote *The Velvet Horn* here, and, of course, that was the best, that was the masterpiece.

Mr. Griffin: I'm sure that was an important consideration in his love of Gainesville, the fact that he wrote his masterpiece here.

Dr. Fain: And when he first came here, Andrew was about forty-five or forty-six years old, quite young, in the prime of his artistic life.

Mr. Griffin: One of the things I remember, too, was that his classes and his office occupied a green prefabricated building behind Anderson Hall, which I guess had been constructed after World War II.

Dr. Fain: Office 119, Building D.

Mr. Griffin: Building D, which has been torn down, only about three years ago. It made me a little sad to see that. Certainly, it was not one of the most magnificent structures on the campus, but there were some magnificent things going on over there because of him.

Dr. Fain: And remember that the room, a good big room, was crowded with chairs. People would come from towns all around here on Thursday nights. Some of them had been in his classes, some of them hadn't. It was quite a tradition, those Thursday nights.

Mr. Griffin: Every Thursday night, wasn't it?

Dr. Fain: And actually the class varied. Students and visitors stayed two or three hours, you know. Andrew would stick around if anybody wanted to talk. They would have a period in between when they'd all go out in the hall and talk it all over.

Mr. Griffin: James Dickey was one of Mr. Lytle's assistants for a time. Was that an entirely happy relationship?

Dr. Fain: No, it was not. There was a conflict of interests. No one knew exactly why, but Dickey wanted to do things one way and Andrew wanted to do them another way.

Mr. Griffin: A phrase which sticks with me, which I have heard Mr. Lytle repeat many, many times about a student's work, "It shows pro-

mise, but it's not finished, it's not finished." I guess that was an effort on his part to make his student produce not a commercial work but an artistic work.

Dr. Fain: I think I told you yesterday, when you were talking about Harry Crews, Harry told me, "I love that old man, but he doesn't like my writing. He says I've never finished anything."

Mr. Griffin: That's a very interesting story. I think as a teacher Mr. Lytle probably had as much influence as he has had as a writer and a critic and an editor. It's a side of his career that I'm glad we got to talk about because I think it is one that is never as well known. And, of course, many of the people he taught have become famous—Madison Jones is probably the most distinguished of his students, wouldn't you agree?

Dr. Fain: Could be.

Mr. Griffin: The University of Florida was, I think, very fortunate to have had Mr. Lytle. He established something that has been continued and certainly now has a national reputation. I know Smith Kirkpatrick did an admirable job immediately after Mr. Lytle left.

Dr. Fain: Yes, I think that's true. The creative-writing program is no longer a step-child. William Logan is the present director, and the faculty includes Donald Justice, Harry Crews, Padgett Powell, Debora Greger and, on occasion, Louise Shivers and Peter Taylor.

Mr. Griffin: I certainly appreciate these reflections. Before concluding our conversation, let's return one last time to your first association with Lytle at Vanderbilt University. Lytle was two years ahead of you, was he not?

Dr. Fain: One year. I had classes with him. He was in my philosophy class, my logic class; logic was the first philosophy course. Lytle and Robert Penn Warren, as well as Merrill Moore, were all three in that class.

Mr. Griffin: Do you remember Mr. Lytle standing out as a brilliant student?

Dr. Fain: No, nobody talked much in the philosophy classes. We had a very distinguished teacher, Herbert C. Sanborn, but the old gentleman's method was to talk, to lecture. He would come in without any notes; he would give a little summary of what we were saying last time; and then he would go right on.

Mr. Griffin: It seems that you told me some time ago that at Vanderbilt Mr. Lytle was quite a dancer, he liked to dance.

Dr. Fain: Well, he was quite a man-about-the-campus. He dated some of the most popular debutantes and took them to dances. I remember him as a very fast waltzer on the ballroom floor. I guess that's what you were thinking about.

Mr. Griffin: I remember Mr. Lytle always called you "Tyree." That's what all the Vanderbilt people called you, I believe. Rather than calling

you "John," they called you "Tyree." Is that a family name?

Dr. Fain: Yes, on my father's side. My grandfather had a cousin who was in the Confederate Army with him, and his name was "Tyree." My father and I were named for him. As a boy, I got sort of tired of the "Tyree, Jr." But in my writing I've always had to use all three names because people wouldn't know who it was if I didn't put the "Tyree" in there.

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'Frank Taylor, associate professor emeritus in humanities and creative writing, University of Florida, presently resides in Gainesville in retirement.

'The late T. Walter Herbert, professor emeritus of English, University of Florida, and a Shakespearean specialist.

'Aubrey L. Williams, Distinguished Graduate Research Professor in English, University of Florida, and an eminent scholar in eighteenth-century literature.

'On the pages immediately following this interview, the reader can find Dr. Fain's presentation of Mr. Lytle to receive the Doctor of Letters degree from the University of Florida.

'William N. Ormond, associate-professor emeritus of English, University of Florida, and a recipient of the Thomas Jefferson Award for Outstanding Teaching.

'Mr. Lytle was later to clarify this point. It was not John Ransom, but John Wade, contributor to *I'll Take My Stand* in 1930 and professor of English at the University of Georgia, who in 1948 made the initial suggestions and arrangements which lead to Mr. Lytle's coming to the University of Florida. Mr. Lytle had previously been at the University of Iowa where he had taught creative writing (Flannery O'Connor was one of his students) and served as spring-term director. The change in climate alone came as a welcomed relief, for, as Mr. Lytle reports, "in Iowa the ground in May was still covered with ice and snow."

'An example of Mr. Lytle's meticulous and illuminating criticism of this and other stories can be found in his recently published *Southerners and Europeans: Essays in a Time of Disorder*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

'The late Charles Archibald Robertson was Chairman of the English Department, University of Florida, during Mr. Lytle's years in Gainesville, and South Atlantic Modern Language Association President, 1950-1951.

## PRESENTATION

June 13, 1970

Mr. President:

For many years the University of Florida has been widely known as a good place to learn to become a serious writer. This fact is due chiefly to Andrew Nelson Lytle, who spent a lucky thirteen-year period in our English Department from 1945 to 1961. While here he wrote his masterpiece, *The Velvet Horn*, one of the most distinguished novels of the twentieth century. Since leaving, he has remained in close touch with his students and friends on the faculty here, so that Florida's reputation as a school of modern letters has continued. It is therefore fitting in this year when the University is holding its first Florida Writers' Conference that we call to the moment of honor a cherished adopted son.

Mr. Lytle was born in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. He graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1925, studied in France and England and spent two years in George Pierce Baker's famous school of drama at Yale. He has received many awards and fellowships for creative work in fiction. In his early life as a writer Mr. Lytle belonged to a literary group known as the Fugitives, an important part (some authorities say the most important part) of the Southern literary renaissance. Before coming to Florida he taught at Southwestern University, the University of the South at Sewanee, and the University of Iowa. Since leaving Florida he has been the editor of the renowned *Sewanee Review*, the oldest literary magazine in the country.

Mr. President, I have the honor and the particular personal pleasure to present to you Andrew Nelson Lytle, novelist, short-story writer, essayist, historian, editor, and longtime teacher at the University of Florida, for the degree of Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*.

John Tyree Fain

Professor of English

## Remembering Andrew

*Clinton W. Trowbridge*

Seated at the end of the long table, he finishes reading and sets down the book with a sigh, as if he's just finished listening to great music. As he talks about the story, Flaubert's "The Legend of St. Julien the Hospitaler," and elicits answers to questions, the meaning of the work unfolds, flowers, comes forth, reveals itself. He approaches discussion of the story with a mixture of wit and reverence. We are hunters, all of us, tracking the author, endeavoring to capture him in his lair, hoping not to be overcome. "Now that we've gone this far," he says (half an hour has past) "Let us see if we cannot penetrate the veil a bit further. Who, for instance, can describe the enveloping action? Mr. Trowbridge, you wish to speak?" I have just had a brilliant insight. Or, rather, the term I have learned recently perfectly applies here and I am dying to show it off.

"Hagiology, sir. The whole history of hagiology. In the Western World." My wife regards me with amazement—and a degree of scorn. Others present look sullen, bewildered, in awe. Several regard Mr. Lytle, expectantly.

"Yes, the lives of the saints. Of course. All of them. The history of the church, of spiritual suffering. Abnegation. What it is to be a saint. Where it comes from. Where this particular saint fits in."

It took me some time to get over my own pomposity; but even then, in my graduate school days, when such an attitude was often held in high esteem, Andrew conveyed to us a sense of the glory and freshness of the work of art. A story, a poem, had life, as well as a life of its own. It shimmered. It was radiant. It dazzled. Yet could be seen, if properly viewed.

Just before Andrew left the University of Florida to become editor of the *Sewanee Review*, I talked with him about *Catcher in The Rye*

and how much I admired it. "You can't have your protagonist speak from the confines of a mental institution. It casts incredulity on the point of view." Yet he took the piece I wrote and provided me with my first, most exciting publication thrill. When I contacted him many years later, however, asking if I could review Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, he replied that he was not interested in Bellow's work and was not planning to review it, defending his idiosyncratic, critical rebelliousness with the notion that an editor, by definition, was an autocrat, and did not always have to explain. Nor did he care much for Updike. On a piece I sent him concerning light imagery in *Rabbit, Run*, he commented:

He [Rabbit] is just not worth all the effort  
you put on him. There is not sufficient depth  
for the meaning which you attach to his action.  
And this is particularly true in the last  
part of it.

Symbolism had to be firmly grounded, as in Flannery O'Connor. Its deepest roots were in the sacramental.

Andrew formed my critical mind and was my model as a teacher. I did not always beard the author in his lair, but without Andrew as an example and guide, I would never have known there was a track to follow, spoor to scent; never have enjoyed the thrill of pursuit.

Andrew was an actor in his youth—and thereafter—and knew how to use his talent to get a point across or bring life to a line. His reading aloud was surpassed only by his ability to tell a story: "The Weaning of . . ." The name escapes me but not the age of the central character: 16. Literature was to be celebrated in laughter as well as otherwise enjoyed. I remember him striding the halls declaiming from his own just-published novel, *The Velvet Horn*, what he claimed was his favorite line: "That tweren't no dead fart; that were a rattle snake," his laughter irrepressible and contagious. Andrew was a Dionysus in Academe; a disdainer of footnotes and "furthermores" and "howevers"; a believer in the teacher and writer as joy bringer; a nourisher of the same; an enemy to pedantry and dullness and all pompous pretensions. I think of him, sometimes, down on his haunches, late at night, kicking his legs out in a Russian Cossack dance, many of the younger members of the party already off to the land of nod; and the image stirs my blood and quickens my sense that what writers and critics and teachers (good ones, that is) really devote their lives to is the dance of life.

## Notes on Contributors

**M.E. Bradford**, professor of English at the University of Dallas, is the author of *Rumors of Mortality: An Introduction to Allen Tate*, and *The Form Discovered: Essays on the Achievement of Andrew Lytle*.

**Cleanth Brooks** is Gray Professor of Rhetoric, emeritus, at Yale University and the author of *The Well-Wrought Urn* and *William Faulkner: Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond*, among many other books.

**James A. Bryant, Jr.**, chairs the department of English at the University of Kentucky. In addition to his interests in the literature of the South, he is a Shakespearean scholar.

**Thomas Carlson** is associate professor of English at the University of the South and a former student of Andrew Lytle's. His work on Mr. Lytle has also appeared in *The Southern Review*.

**Joanne Childers** still lives in Gainesville, Florida, where she was a student of Mr. Lytle's. Her poetry has appeared in the *Sewanee Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *College English*, and the *Cumberland Poetry Review*.

**George Core** is editor of the *Sewanee Review*. He frequently contributes to other literary quarterlies and is the author of *Southern Fiction Today*, published by the University of Georgia Press.

**Joe Cumming** formerly headed the Atlanta bureau of *Newsweek* and wrote a column for the *Atlanta Constitution*. He is the author of *The Family Secret*, a collection of poems published by Peachtree Publishers, Ltd. He is professor of journalism at West Georgia College.

**John Tyree Fain**, 1904-1986, late emeritus professor of English at the University of Florida, championed the Fugitives and Agrarians, many of whom he knew personally. Dr. Fain edited the book reviews written by Donald Davidson for the *Tennessean* and, with Thomas Daniel Young, collected and edited the correspondence between Davidson and Tate. For the *South Atlantic Bulletin*, he reviewed Andrew Lytle's *The Hero with the Private Parts*.

**Merrill Joan Gerber's** fiction has appeared in *The Atlantic* and *The New Yorker*. She lives in California now, but was Mr. Lytle's student at the University of Florida.

**Carl H. Griffin** chairs the department of English at DeKalb College's



North Campus. He studied under Andrew Lytle at the University of Florida, and is one of the authors of *Andrew Lytle, Walker Percy, Peter Taylor: a Reference Guide*.

David Hallman is professor of English at James Madison University. He is writing a biography of Andrew Lytle.

Lawrence Hetrick was Andrew Lytle's student at the University of Florida, after which he taught at the university. He now teaches at the Gwinnett Center of DeKalb College. His poetry has appeared in the *Sewanee Review*.

Madison Jones is writer-in-residence emeritus at Auburn University. He was a student of Andrew Lytle's at the University of Florida, and is the author of numerous novels, including *A Cry of Absence*, *The Innocent*, *A Buried Land*, *Passage Through Gehenna*, *An Exile*, and *Season of the Strangler*.

Smith Kirkpatrick is the author of *The Sun's Gold*. He taught with Mr. Lytle at the University of Florida and directed the creative writing program there after Mr. Lytle's departure.

Victor Kramer is professor of English at Georgia State University. He writes on James Agee and Thomas Merton.

Marion Montgomery is professor emeritus at the University of Georgia. Author of poetry, fiction, and criticism, he delivered the 1987 Lamar Lectures at Mercer University, published by the University of Georgia Press as *Possum, and Other Receipts for the Recovery of "Southern" Being*.

Lewis P. Simpson recently retired as editor of *The Southern Review* and William A. Read Professor of English at Louisiana State University. He is the author of *The Dispossessed Garden* and *The Man of Letters in New England and the South*, among other books.

Warren Smith studied Andrew Lytle with Marion Montgomery at the University of Georgia, writing his master's thesis on Mr. Lytle. Having worked in Los Alamos, New Mexico, he recently returned to the South.

Michael Jordan is a contributor to *The Southern Partisan* and occasionally writes reviews for *The University Bookman* and *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture*. Presently he is writing a dissertation, "Memory in the Poetry and Criticism of Donald Davidson," under the direction of Marion Montgomery at the University of Georgia.

Clinton Trowbridge, professor of English at the College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, Maine, was a student of Mr. Lytle's at the University of Florida. He is the author of *Crow Island Journal*. His essays and reviews have appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Harper's*, and the *Sewanee Review*.



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